

The Soddy – Chapter 1

“We received a foreclosure notice today.”

“How many payments are we behind?”

“Four. I’ve done everything I could think of to keep up, even resorting to our prep foods to all but eliminate grocery costs. Your unemployment simply isn’t enough for the house payment, utilities and gas.”

“Is there anything else we can cut? How about the phone and internet?”

“The phone company cut off long distance two months ago and everything else this month.”

“You couldn’t work out a payment plan?”

“Sure I could; but what do I use to make the payments?”

Unemployment had surpassed 10%. Interestingly, if you eliminated all of the illegal immigrants working below minimum wage jobs, and people were willing to take those jobs, unemployment would be zero. But, that wasn’t how it worked in our country. There was supposed to be something in the stimulus package that kept us from being foreclosed on, but we couldn’t find out anything about it.

Thomas P. ‘Boston’ Corbett was the name my father hung on me. He was a history buff with a sense of humor and I sometimes hated that. I had been named after the Union soldier who killed John Wilkes Booth, Thomas P. Corbett. The back story on him was that Corbett married, but his wife died in childbirth. Following her death, he moved to Boston, and continued working as a hatter. He became a born-again evangelical Christian and changed his name to Boston, the name of the city where he was reborn.

Boston Corbett was crazy, you know. There has been speculation that Corbett was exposed to the fumes of mercury that were used in the hatter’s trade causing Corbett’s later mental problems. Maybe that’s the source of the expression, ‘mad as a hatter’, because it has been suggested that the Mad Hatter in Alice in Wonderland was based on the expression.

“For two cents, I’d tell them to shove the house and take what little money we could put together and build a sod house on Dad’s place.”

“Are you crazy?”

“I might be; however there are sod houses that are over 100 years old still standing. They’re mostly persevered as historical sites.”

“Right, like you know how to build a sod house.”

“Before they cutoff the internet, I read a piece on Wiki. I could go to the Library, get on one of their computers and download the plans.”

“What about the kids?”

“What about the kids? We’d have two choices, enroll them in the school I attended or home school them.”

“How many unemployment insurance payment do you have left?”

“Eight weeks (four payments) and the extended benefits run out.”

“What are we going to live on after that?”

“I hate socialism and swore I’d never go on the dole. That said there is Medicaid and food stamps. Our only living expense would be kerosene for the oil lamps, gasoline and oil for the chainsaw and some diesel for my pickup.”

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“Dad, would it be ok with you if I built a sod house here on the farm?”

“What for?”

“They’ve issued a foreclosure notice on our home and I don’t have many weeks of unemployment left. I’ve applied for every job listed in the paper and at the Job Services Office.”

“Nonsense, you can move in here until you get back on your feet.”

“Perhaps temporarily, but I really want to build a sod house.”

“It’s stupid to build on property owned by someone else. I’ll deed over forty acres to you and Sheena. When your mother and I are gone, the 40 will be deducted from your share of the section so you’ll only get another 120. Your brothers and sister will each get the same 160 as you.”

“Thank you. We’ll move here over the weekend and get the kids enrolled in school on Monday. Can I store our possessions in the machine shed?”

“There’s no power there.”

“Will our refrigerator and freezer fit in the basement?”

“Well, of course. I take it you still have meat in your freezer?”

“We have some but not a lot. We’ve been living off our preps for some time now according to Sheena.”

“Your mother and I will plant the next garden a bit bigger and Sheena can help her can. I don’t believe the economy will turn around anytime soon. Your grandfather lived through that Great Depression. From what he told me about it, our economy is in worse shape than it was in the ‘30s.”

“Do you still have the old wood stoves?”

“I cleaned them up, oiled them down and stored them in the machine shed. If you want them, feel free to use them. You’ll probably have to use a solvent and cut the oil. What about electricity and a phone?”

“Could we just leave the refrigerator and freezer in the basement? I could probably manage a propane fueled refrigerator.”

“How do you intend to pay for propane?”

“I have a pickup and a good chainsaw.”

“Have chainsaw, will travel?”

“I hope I can get a cutting permit for the Mark Twain National Forest.”

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The farm was east of Lebanon, Missouri on state route 32 not all that far from The Big Piney portion of the Mark Twain National Forest. Big Piney Area included Fort Leonard Wood. After I graduated from High School, I gone to Independence and taken a job at the Lake City Plant. At the time I was laid off, my job was to operate a machine that assembled 20mm ammo. It wasn’t a really marketable skill, but paid well. As the demand for ammo began to dry up, because we were only fighting in Afghanistan and not Iraq, Alliant Techsystems Inc. was forced to reduce staff. I was one of the most senior employees cut. I was far too young to be offered any kind of buyout package.

I spent some time in the Library searching Wiki for ‘sod house’. It seemed that they didn’t have a lot of information but did have a floor plan and some discussion about the roofs. People who built a steeple roof as opposed to a sod roof ended up with a house that lasted. I decided to build a sod house like the Gustav Rohrich Sod House.

Sheena was beyond unhappy with my decision about a sod house but moving in with the folks and getting Susan and William started in school kept her so busy that she didn’t have time to complain. Meanwhile, I used Dad’s trailer and my pickup to haul our

things from Independence. My brother John, who lived in Kansas City, came over each day after work and helped me load up our goods. It seemed to me that I spent more time driving and sitting around waiting for John than I actually did working. Our possessions were all removed before the lender took possession. I gave them a forwarding address of General Delivery, Lebanon, MO.

Dad picked one particular 40 acre field and a deed was prepared transferring it to Susan and William because it avoided some taxes and the kids names weren't on our mortgage. While I knew he wasn't happy with us losing our home, it was a done deal and there was no turning back.

"Well, if you're going to be a pioneer, you'll need horses, a wagon, a barn, a well, septic system and horse drawn implements. How are you going to manage that, Boston?"

"Maybe I should get the sod building built before I worry about that."

"You can't. Most Soddy's were built with a lower floor, as much as three feet deep, and I assume you're going for indoor plumbing if you plan to put in a propane refrigerator and wood stoves. That 40 acres I deeded to you is mostly prairie grass and should be good for a sod house. If it were me, I attach wire and stucco the outside. Add a steeple roof and a finish to the inside walls and you might just have something that will last. I'll tell you what; I'll help with the windows and doors."

"Thanks, I'll talk to Sheena about it."

"Now get this straight; I will not live in a hole in the ground. The floor has to be above ground level, a minimum of 2 feet. I can use a wood stove, I suppose, but I will have a refrigerator in the house and a washer for the laundry so you better get to looking for a wringer washer and plan on enough clothes lines. You'd better sell that gun safe too; it should cover the cost of the appliances."

"I will not sell any of my guns."

"I didn't suggest that, just the safe. You can build a rifle rack on the wall like the one they had on Gunsmoke and a set of pegs for the gun belts."

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Our gun collection consisted of two Marlin rifles, an 1894C in .357 and an 1894 in .44 magnum. Our handguns were also single action, case colored Ruger Vaquero in .3357 magnum with 5½" barrel for Sheena and a 7½" for me in .44 magnum. Both kids had Marlin 39A Golden triggers. Our only shotgun was a Remington Express combo in 12-gauge with short and long barrels. The magazine tube had been modified to accept the 3-round extension by drilling out the dimples with 3/16" drill.

My want list for firearms was a page long and included a Main Battle Rifle in .308 NATO, extra magazines, a scope if appropriate; and, dependable carbines for Sheena and the boys in either .30 caliber Carbine or .223 NATO plus 9mm handguns.

The 40 had previous been a wet spot/marsh with good thick sod. I removed and stacked the sod from a space of 24' deep by 52' long; that sod would be my starting material. Dad furnished a septic tank, PVC pipe and field tile for the drain field. I realized that part of the reason he may have selected this particular 40 was the presence of a good deep well which could pull down 30gpm.

"I don't know how we're ever going to be able to repay you Dad."

"Don't worry about, I'm keeping track and it will even out."

After I installed the septic and the water line to the well, construction of the side walls began. I was up to about 3' when I ran out of sod. I determined where we'd put our machine shed, a much larger building and that sod raised the walls to 7'. My next area to clear was where I intended to put a hen house. That got the walls up to roughly 8'.

A truck showed up from the lumberyard with wood for the floor, windows, doors, roof framing, OSB and nails. Dad said he'd added it to our tab. He kept a close eye on my progress and as the house near basic completion; I received tarpaper, asphalt shingles, rolled wire and stucco. The shingles were easy, the stucco much less so. I put on a base coat, followed later by a second, white tinted textured coat.

Dad installed the chimneys for the potbellied stove in the living room, for the kitchen stove plus the propane lines for the refrigerator and a 40-gallon propane hot water heater. Our home was caught in a time warp with one foot in the very early 20th century and another halfway through the 1950s. After I added green drywall on the interior and taped the seams, our new home was ready for occupancy. Before we could start moving, Dad brought 3 5-gallon pails of semi-gloss Navajo White paint.

Between when we moved back home and we moved into our new home, Mom and Sheena completed an oval braided rug for the living room floor. It was left to Dad and me to move the furniture into home because Mom and Sheena were planting and tending to the garden. While the garden spot was just dry enough to plant the fields had been too wet. When the fields dried, I helped Dad till and plant his remaining land.

With the Soddy all but finished, we moved small bales of straw under the floor to close the gap and provide an extra measure of insulation. You couldn't tell just by looking that the main building material had been sod.

In addition to helping Dad with chores and cultivating the fields, I was able to acquire some old telephone poles and used them to first frame the uprights for the machine shed followed by the barn. We put an ad in the Lebanon paper advertising for either a Maytag or Briggs & Stratton gasoline powered wringer washer.

A response came a few days later and the seller told Mom it was ours if we wanted, free. So after that, Dad and I rebuilt the machine starting with the motor, bearings and other parts, which were replaced on an as needed basis. A section of pipe, a welder and some wire completed the 4 line clothesline. In lieu of wages, Dad gave me diesel money and promised a share of the harvest when it was sold.

Just how harebrained was it building a Soddy? It beat the heck out of 4 people living out of a pickup. Sure, we were running up a tab with good ol' Mom and Dad, but they weren't complaining. Actually, Dad was glad to have my help on the farm and Mom was happy to have Sheena helping her.

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The US of A was going through major problems, including the real estate bust, the banking bust, the stock market bust and anything else you can bust. In truth, the only thing going up was unemployment. Because we lacked electricity, we had to settle for a battery operated radio for news. Our TV was stored in Dad's basement. We often ate with them, especially dinner. Mom and Sheena would work together on the meal and Mom was teaching Sheena how to cook some of the things I liked growing up.

Dad located some good used corrugated metal to use to construct the machine shed and the barn. He put enough lumber on our tab to build the roofs and we used the corrugated metal on the roofs. I used some of the framing lumber and corrugated metal to enclose the well into a well house. We had neither machines to put into the machine shed nor animals to put into the barn.

That changed when I got a minimum wage job in Lebanon working during the winter. Between our share of the garden and our share of the farm's crops, we now had a little money, very little. Dad suggested that I talk to either Ferrellgas or AmeriGas and get them to install a tank and eliminate the bottles. The best I could do was to get them to install a 550 gross, 500 net gallon tank. With only a propane hot water heater and refrigerator, 500-gallons would last for a long time. I also got one drum of unleaded gas for the washing machine and stabilized it with PRI-G. I'd fill the 2-gallon can for Sheena and she'd use it to fill the tank on the washer.

The next problem that arose was washing our clothes during the winter. We couldn't run the gasoline powered washer in the house or hang clothes on the lines to dry. Mom let Sheena hook up and use our washer and dryer. It occurred to me that the money spent on the gasoline washer had been wasted money. I didn't have a clue how people washed and dried their clothes back in the day of the Soddy's. I assumed that their only source of hot water was the water well on the stove or heating up a large pot for a bath. However, since we had hot water, we had a shower.

Spring of 2010 rolled around and the kids were out of school. Their grades had improved noticeably from what they had gotten in Independence. Dad lent a hand until the

fields dried and we put in a chicken house. With our accumulated savings, we purchased a young bred cow, a young bred sow and 10 dozen pullets. Livestock feed came from Dad and was put on our tab.

“How big is our tab?”

“Don’t worry about it, I held back a little of your share from last year’s crops and applied it to your tab.”

“But still, a man likes to know where he stands.”

“It’s like this, when we’re gone and the estate settles, it will be evenly divided and your tab will be deducted from your share and divided among your brothers and sister. None of them seem to be interested in becoming farmers, are you interested?”

“I hadn’t given it much thought.”

“Well, think about it, you’ll have a quarter section and three more you can buy, if you want.”

My sister, Susan, and other brother, William, lived in the St. Louis area. She was a homemaker and Susan’s husband Don worked for Anheuser-Busch. William also worked for Anheuser-Busch and William’s wife, Cindy, worked as an elementary school teacher. Their jobs were reasonably secure, according to what they told Mom and Dad. John’s wife’s name was Marsha. Each family had two children.

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Once we made it through the first year, Sheena seemed to be more at ease with living in the Soddy. She had a list of things she hoped to see happen, however. Couldn’t I change out the jets in our gas stove and move the wood burning kitchen stove outside? Stuff like that, plus she really missed electricity. I’d managed to get a personal use cutting permit from the BLM and US Forest Service, but hadn’t harvested much more wood than what we burned up that winter because of the job I found. I had two cords split and stacked when spring rolled around. However, Dad said he’d help me over the course of the summer harvesting standing dead trees.

We managed to cut, split and stack 10 more cords working weekends. Dad helped me build an addition to the house, an overhang where we could put the washer and the wood kitchen stove. I got the jets in Lebanon and moved Sheena’s gas stove to the Soddy. Our sow produced a litter of 9 pigs and our cow had a heifer. We butchered the chickens and stored them in our nearly empty freezer in Dad’s basement.

“I’ll split a beef with you so you don’t have to feed out the heifer and butcher her. You can keep the gilts to increase your hog herd and either butcher or sell the barrows. Will a side of beef and two hogs fill your freezer?”

“Nearly to overflowing, it will be nice to not be worrying about our next meal. Between the canned goods, the meat plus the staples I’ve picked up in Lebanon, we’re in fairly good shape, food wise.”

“You should be good on firewood since you’re using the propane kitchen stove. I suppose that Sheena has been nagging you about getting electricity.”

“How did you know?”

“She talks to your mother. She really likes the house and was surprised how well it turned out. I’ll admit I had my doubts, but I was wrong; you ended up with a very nice house.”

“I miss having a basement.”

“Well, this is tornado country; you really should consider a storm shelter.”

“You know, if I built a large storm shelter, I could get a standby generator and put some of our appliances in the shelter.”

“You could but it wouldn’t be economical. The way to go, if you must have electricity, is either solar or wind. But think about it, your home is built and about the only way you could wire it is with wire mold.”

“I realize that Dad. However, the charge controller, batteries and inverters could be in the shelter. And, as funds permit, we might be able to pick up a used generator.”

For those who don’t know what wire mold is, it is surface mounted, 2 piece, square tubing with a base and a cover. While rarely seen in modern homes, it is often found in old homes built before electricity became common.

Dad had been paying me money and Sheena was earning food working in the garden. I had a job during the winter and concluded that some might wonder what happened to all of that money. A portion of it went for staples from the grocery store. A larger portion went for clothing for our growing children. School activities took a bit more and before long, we didn’t have much left. We did have livestock and a full freezer in Mom and Dad’s basement. However, without power, it was either hauling the laundry to the basement and washing it there, or use the gasoline powered washing machine and line dry it.

We were actually doing ok as a family despite our circumstances when during the summer of 2011, Bill fell and broke his arm. Dad and I put him between us in the pickup and drove to the hospital in Lebanon. They took an X-Ray, set the bone and applied the cast. I was talking to the financial lady when Dad came up and asked, “How much do we owe?”

“Dad, the kids are covered by Medicaid.”

“No sir, they’re covered by me; I pay my bills, how much?”

She told him and he pulled out his checkbook and paid the bill.

“I’ll put that on your tab Boston. Did you apply for food stamps?”

“Uh, no.”

“We don’t live off the dole. If you need money for food, just ask.”

I didn’t tell him that Sheena had qualified for food stamps (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) which automatically meant that we got WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children). With no babies in the family, our WIC benefits were limited. We got some eggs, cheese, milk, peanut butter, juices, dry beans, fruits, vegetables and cereals. Programs like Medicaid, Food Stamps and WIC were developed and intended to insure at least minimal nutritional needs and medical care. Did I feel guilty taking it? Not when it was for our kids.

“Medicaid covered the arm didn’t it?”

“It would have Sheena, but Dad came up and insisted on paying the bill. He asked me about food stamps and I lied.”

“Half lied; it’s a debit card now so no stamps are involved.”

“He’d say it was the same thing. In fact, he said that if we needed money for food, just ask.”

“I told your Mom but maybe she won’t tell him.”

“Mom won’t if you ask her not to tell him. Even when I was working in Lebanon last winter, I didn’t make enough to force us off the benefits. We won’t be doing it for much longer; I’m hoping I can get the job back this winter. Are you happy now that you have your stove back?”

“Yes, thank you. It will be nice when we get electricity so I can use my washer and dryer. You can get the dryer converted to propane, can’t you?”

“I can get a conversion kit from Sears.”

“Is that going to increase our expense?”

“It will for the propane, but with our keep-full plan, the tank is topped off every month and we won’t run out of gas. Each item we add, like the stove and the dryer, will increase our propane usage. You can line dry in the summer if you have time, the clothes smell better.”

“What are you going to do for electricity?”

“Dad suggested solar or wind. I priced some stuff and a 130 watt solar panel is \$700. A 6kw inverter is around \$4,500. Plus, with either system, we’d need a charge controller, and batteries to store the electricity. At the moment, all the choices are out of reach. A generator would be nice to have, but they’re expensive and so is the fuel. I’ll do what I can to get the washer and dryer over here and hooked up. If all we used a generator for was to run the washer and dryer, it might not be so bad.”

“You could enclose the porch.”

“I’ll do that after I move them here.”

I began researching generators on the web and found the Onan RV Quiet Diesel that came in 8kw, 10kw and 12.5kw sizes. The largest produced 104 amps of 120 and used only 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ gph doing so. At half load, it used $\frac{3}{4}$ gph. The sound Level: 68 dB(A) at 3 m; approximately 54 dB(A) at 15 m - $\frac{1}{2}$ load. New, they were a breath taking \$9,649.

“I think I found the perfect generator. It is 12.5kw and burns $\frac{3}{4}$ -gallon of diesel per hour at half load. That would be more than enough to power your washer and dryer. If it’s ok with you, we’ll start saving up.”

“How soon can we have it?”

“If I combine what I get from the farm with what I earn in Lebanon this winter, maybe by spring.”

“What’s your worst case scenario?”

“Fall of next year.”

Dad had a good crop and after taking about $\frac{1}{3}$ of my share and saying we were paid in full, I cleared \$8,000 and change. I was able to get the same low paying job in Lebanon and we saved every penny we could. Susan and Bill started school in the fall without new clothes, but they got some for Christmas. Their clothes weren’t worn out, just out-grown. By March of 2012, we had the money and I managed to buy it wholesale. All we were missing was a fuse box and fuel tank plus #2 diesel fuel. Oh yeah, and PRI-D.

The Soddy – Chapter 2

Let's back up here to this past Christmas. Dad and Mom got the kids clothing and Browning Hi-Power pistols, the classic models. Sheena received a Hi-Power and I received a Taurus PT1911. Because my pistol cost less than theirs, I also received extra ammo, both Lawman 230gr FMJ and Gold Dot 230gr HP, 1,000 rounds of each. Each pistol came with 5 magazines, new surplus in the case of the Browning's and new for the Taurus. They had to divide 1,000 rounds of 124gr +P Gold Dot and 1,000 rounds of 124gr FMJ Lawman among them.

We also received, Holster, Pistol, Hip M1916 in black, plus, black pistol belts one size fits all up to 46". I looked it up, the holsters were \$30 and the belts \$12. Those firearms got me closer to the list of firearms I wanted, but I didn't have a main battle rifle or carbines for Sheena and the kids. I couldn't do it this summer because I spent what money I had left on 2 55-gallon drums of #2 diesel fuel and one gallon of PRI-D. The new AWB had been overturned by SCOTUS as being in violation of the 2nd Amendment.

But, with Dad's help, we got the porch enclosed and the washer and dryer moved and setup. He saw our new generator but didn't say anything, just scowled. We cut 6 cords of firewood and I spent evenings splitting it. On Independence Day of 2012, we had them over for a picnic.

"You didn't wire the place?"

"No, I didn't. We only use the generator to power the washer and dryer. They don't draw that much power and we get by with about ½gph."

"That little? I thought that generators were inefficient."

"They are when compared to grid power. However, we only run it on wash day and Sheena line dries in the summer."

"So how much diesel does that amount to?"

"About 2½ to 3-gallons. We should be able to sell that gasoline powered washing machine, we don't need it."

"Maybe not, but store it in the machine shed and run an ad in the paper. You might turn a profit now that it works. Is that drum of gas stabilized?"

"I used PRI-G."

"Not Stabil?"

"This is better."

“Sez who?”

“Independent third party trials.”

“Oh. The crops are looking good this year; we might have a bumper crop. Do you have any plans on what to do with your share of the money?”

“First thing I’m going to do is have the pickup tuned and a brake job. Second thing I’ll do is put in that storm shelter we discussed. If we have any money left, I may buy a rifle and shotgun I’ve wanted for a long time.”

“What kind of rifle and shotgun?”

“A main battle rifle based on the M14, probably a Springfield Armory M1A Loaded or National Match. The shotgun I want is that Mossberg model 590 and, depending on the price, maybe the one with the ghost ring sights.”

“What do they run?”

“The rifle would probably cost around \$1,500 and the shotgun around \$500.”

“You worry about the rifle; we’ll get you the shotgun for Christmas.”

“Thank you. The other things on my list are carbines for Sheena and the kids.”

“The M1 carbine?”

“That or something in .223 NATO that uses a short stroke gas piston.”

“Just as long as you don’t plan on buying AR15s.”

“Don’t worry; they don’t have a short stroke piston.”

“Who are you voting for come November?”

“The other guy. Obama made a lot of promises but that didn’t keep us from losing our home. We were very careful not to buy a home where the payment was a large percentage of our income, not that it helped.”

“It’s six of one and a half dozen of the other, Boston. I must say this is a very nice house. Where are you going to put the storm shelter?”

“Right behind the house. It will be roughly the size of the house, 24’x52’.”

“You’re as crazy as your namesake.”

“I just may be. On the other hand, we can use it as the basement I didn’t build. We could put our freezer, refrigerator, washer and dryer down there plus our extra furniture.”

“If you power that many appliances, your diesel bill will go up. It seems to me that you’d need something more than 2 55-gallon drums of fuel.”

“I realize that. I’ve been keeping an eye open for a used diesel tank that doesn’t leak. A 10,000-gallon tank would keep the generator running for almost a year.”

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I didn’t tell Dad, but I’d checked out the Springfield Armory website. The Loaded had about 90% of the features of the National Match and cost about \$500-\$600 less. The price difference would pay for a lot of magazines. I had also checked with a gun store in Lebanon and he had new, in the wrapper, USGI magazines for \$25 each. I had invested \$500 and the magazines were safely tucked away for future use. I’d also found them on the web. They were the OEM magazine for largest M1A rifle manufacturer (Springfield Armory).

The one thing I didn’t dare do was count my chickens before they hatched. As a result, my activities with respect to the rifle were totally circumspect. The magazines were safely tucked away in the attic and I hadn’t mentioned them to anyone. For all practical purposes, they didn’t exist. We had other things that weren’t in evidence like a case of oil and extra air, fuel and oil filters for the generator. Not much, only two changes worth, and with the money from my winter job in Lebanon, I planned to buy more.

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I began the hole for the shelter using Dad’s tractor shortly thereafter. I worked weekends to get the huge hole in the ground dug and the dirt stacked. I went down 10’ for no particular reason. After, I graded it level and hand dug the footings. Finally, I installed the plumbing. Digging into our emergency funds, I got a load of Ready-mix and Sheena helped me screed and finish the floor to a light broom finish. I had to stop there until I got my share of the money from the farm.

It turned out to be a better than average year with high livestock prices and even better grain prices. With no money to repay to Dad, Sheena and I cleared \$14,500 and change. I ordered the concrete block and mortar immediately and with Sheena’s and the kids help began to raise the block walls. Winter held off a bit and the walls were up before it got too cold. The next step was the overhead aka the lid. I started to work in Lebanon with the shelter unfinished. That proved to be a blessing in disguise. A local company that had gone broke excavating roads was selling off their used road plate. Each piece was 12’ long and 8’ wide. I was able to buy 14 sheets of the plate and they delivered it for \$50.

One of the guys at work had a portable welder with its own generator and I discussed his welding the plates into 24' pieces. The deal we worked out was I'd pay him for his time, welding rod and fuel plus an hourly rate. He came out, looked the job over and advised that, after he welded one side, we'd have to find a way to flip the plates so he could weld the other side because he wasn't going to weld upside down. I tried to persuade him otherwise and he finally said he'd do it for time and one half.

I knew that the lid had to be supported in the middle and had included an "I" beam down the centerline of the shelter. We worked through spring welding the plates, positioning them and tacking them in place. I basically cleared zero from my winter job although the shelter was enclosed.

Meanwhile, back at the farm, I received a Mossberg 590A1 for Christmas and Sheena and the kids each received a used carbine, caliber .30, M1 and 10 30-round M-2 magazines. There was nothing special about the carbines although they had an arsenal re-work and pristine bores. Externally, they'd seen their time in the trenches.

I voted for McCain, but Obama won by a very narrow margin. Unfortunately for him, the 2010 election and the 2012 election saw Republicans gain a clear majority in the House. It was reminiscent of Dubya and the 2006 Congress, or worse. In the spring, with the shelter nearly done and usable, I spent some time moving the dirt back over it to cover it and packing the soil by driving over it with the tractor multiple times. The shelter entrance was an open square hole of concrete block that was open at the top. It was about 40" square and left enough room to lower our appliances to the shelter floor level using the loader on the tractor and a block and tackle.

The inlet and exhaust pipes for the generator had been installed in one corner by the welder and I intended to build an enclosure and sound proof it the best I could. However, we basically ran out of money, again. Nearly everything was moved to the shelter and hooked up. A 30-gallon electric water heater was installed for the washer and planned bathroom. Not finding it convenient to climb down the ladder with a basket of laundry, Sheena elected to continue using the gasoline powered washer and line dry the clothes through the summer.

I haven't mention Susan and Bill, much. They were doing great in school and their improved grades continued. When weather permitted they were out on a hastily constructed 100 yard range with their new carbines and their Hi-Powers. They were firing the Alternate Pistol Qualification Course (APQC), a 25-meter range course, FM 3-23.35 Appendix B. Both were shooting the carbines and pistols at the expert level.

I still didn't have my rifle, caliber 7.62mm, M14. Worse, the kids were nagging for cowboy guns for Christmas. We needed a few things to finish the shelter, a blast hatch, a ventilation system plus blast valves for the generator pipes. We were looking at an additional expense of \$3,800 for ventilation, \$3,195 for the hatch and \$165 each for two blast valves (\$7,325 plus shipping). Plus my rifle and a Geiger counter. It was more than

a simple storm shelter, it was intentionally a bomb shelter, but I didn't dare tell anyone except Sheena and then, only after cautioning her not to say a word to anyone.

This summer, I harvested additional firewood with Dad's help and had about 8 cords worth of logs to cut, split and stack. Our supply was building because we were using far less than Dad and I were adding. I found a diesel tank and the seller wouldn't agree to hold it until fall adding that I was the only person to show any interest and odds favored him still having it. It was a used gasoline tank removed from a service station. It had been tested and did not leak. He wanted \$2,000, cash on the barrel head.

I informed Dad and Mom of what the kids wanted for Christmas, Ruger Vaqueros with 5½" barrels. I also suggested that they might consider getting The Package from Radmeters4U for Sheena and me with 3 extra dosimeters and some potassium iodate, KIO₃, 6 bottles.

You would have thought that I asked for a M2HB Browning machine gun from the look Dad gave me. I guess I should have asked him for the rifle. The first of October we sat down and he counted out our share in \$100 bills, 132 of them. I sold our extra pigs and used some of the money to buy a side of beef from him. The calf this year was a bull and we could feed him to market weight and store an entire steer. We had enough money to finish the shelter, install florescent lights, the bathroom and the things from American Safe Rooms.

I also bought the diesel tank and buried it. Then, over the course of the winter, I filled my pickup tank and both drums weekly, adding the fuel to the large, mostly empty, tank. By spring the tank contained nearly 3,400-gallons of stabilized diesel. The blast hatch, blast valves and ventilation system were installed. For Christmas this year, Dad and Mom had given the kids the Rugers and we got The Package. We had the money to buy the rifle, caliber 7.62mm, M1A, Loaded.

"Are you preparing for a nuclear war?"

"I'm preparing for whatever comes next. I even managed to buy that rifle I wanted. I have the magazines and only need some ammo. I'll find some surplus somewhere and would be happy to settle for some Lake City M80 ball loaded on 5-round stripper clips."

"Expensive?"

"These days, probably sixty cents a round. Back in the day, probably thirty cents."

"What is it, gold plated?"

"M80 is standard military 147gr FMJ ammo packed on 5-round stripper clips, 12 stripers per bandoleer, an unknown number of bandoleers, probably 10, to the case. I worked 20mm, not 7.62mm."

“Six hundred a thousand, my God.”

“I’ll get a little soon but wait until fall to load up on the stuff. I haven’t filled my fuel tank either. We’ve made a good start, we have about 3,400 gallons.”

“How long would it run on what you have?”

“Over 2,500 hours. It may take a few seasons to get topped off.”

“How big is the tank?”

“Fourteen thousand.”

“At the rate you’re filling it; it will take three more years.”

“I don’t think so, the shelter is finished and except for a few minor purchases, a considerable portion of my income can go towards filling it. My guess would be 2 years, maybe less.”

“You’re obviously intending to stay on the farm.”

“I guess so; I hadn’t thought about it. I’ve been focused on getting ready for the day.”

“What day?”

“The day an asteroid slams into the planet, someone starts world war three or maybe Yellowstone erupts as a Supervolcano.”

“You’re a pessimist!”

“No, I’m a realist. I’m not saying that any particular one will happen, but something is likely to happen. Maybe the New Madrid Fault Zone will let loose like it did back in 1812. I read where the probability of magnitude 6.0 or greater in the near future is considered significant; a 90% chance of such an earthquake by 2040 has been given. In the 23Jun05, issue of the journal Nature, the odds of another 8.0 event within 50 years were estimated to be between 7 and 10 percent.”

“And then what? I suppose you expect people to go crazy and marauding motorcycle gangs will sweep through the country, raping and pillaging.”

“For an earthquake, I doubt it. On the other hand, what if we did have WW III? There would be very little law and order. What resources we had would be stretched. In that case, I could imagine what you’d say.”

“So, I suppose you’re also storing up food?”

“Staples mostly, plus what we have in the freezer in your basement and our share of the canned goods.”

“What kind of staples?”

“Beans, rice, wheat, rolled oats, instant milk, corn, sugar, salt, yeast, baking powder, baking soda and dry pasta. That doesn’t count pre-mixed products like pancakes, biscuit mix or our flour. We’ve been getting 25-pound bags of baking flour from Wal-Mart, freezing it and storing it in sealed plastic inside pickle pails with oxygen absorbers.”

“Yep, you’re living up to your namesake; you are, without a doubt, a real crackpot. You don’t even know that your shelter would stand up to an earthquake.”

“Rebar in every hole and in every horizontal run. The blocks are filled with concrete, too. It’s at least as strong as your basement.”

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Dad said ‘humph’, ending the conversation. We had nowhere near the amount of LTS food I wanted, preferably one full year for 6 people, the four of us plus Mom and Dad. It was a work in progress and considering where we had started back in 2009, I thought we were doing rather well. Admittedly, it was 2014 and Obama was working hard on keeping his most important goal, universal healthcare, from being repealed; but the economy had barely begun to straighten itself out.

Despite the confidence I’d displayed years earlier, I’d had my doubts more than once. It had been damned hard harvesting the sod and I didn’t know at the time where the materials needed for doors, windows and the roof would come from. My diligence in pursuing the task must have impressed Dad, he helped out. He also got back every penny he invested. Over the course of the years, we had a new roof over our heads, more food than we started with, an all-purpose shelter, generator and a supply of fuel.

“What do you have left to do to have the shelter finished?”

“Sheena, we’re so close. I have to remove the blast hatch to be able to lower the freezer down there and reinstall it. We need about another 10,000 gallons of diesel, more stabilizer; plus ammunition for my new rifle, a CD V-717 remote reading Geiger counter and a lot more food.”

“One more year or two?”

“Yes; I won’t know for sure until we get our share from the farm income. We may have to limit what we add to the tank so there’s money available for other things. I thought about the laundry problem and think I can set up a pulley system supported by a curved section of pipe to allow you to raise and lower the clothes to and from the shelter.”

“Sure wish you’d have built one with a ramp.”

“I do too, now. At the time it would have taken more money than we had available. Perhaps one day we can retrofit it with a ramp in addition to the present blast hatch. That would require a blast door and they would cost more than we spent on the hatch, about \$3,700. We should have two exits anyway.”

“But you haven’t installed the bathroom or kitchen appliances. We still need counters, shelves for storage, and something to reduce the sound of the generator. Are you planning on sleeping on the floor, or are beds in your plans?”

“It’s big enough for 2 small bedrooms and 2 medium sized bedrooms. I can draw chalk lines on the floor if you’d like. I’ll do the bathroom next followed by the generator room. After that, we can move the remaining appliances and find some affordable box springs and mattress sets.”

“It’s apparent that you’re planning on six people, not four.”

“That’s correct; Mom and Dad have a storm shelter, not a bomb shelter. That won’t help them much should we have radiation hazards and have to shelter for an extended period in a shelter having purified air.”

“Do you really think someone will start world war three?”

“I don’t know, but if we’re prepared, it won’t much matter. We’d need an air filtration system if Yellowstone erupted too.”

“What are you going to do after you have the food you want stocked, the diesel tank filled and all of your ‘to do list’ completed?”

“That’s when I start on my second list. Add the ramp and blast door to the shelter, increase our food supply, buy gas masks and Mark I kits plus diazepam, Tyvek suits with boots, gloves and sealing tape, increase our supply of ammo, buy riding horses, get more rifles, and...”

“A second list?”

“I may be a bit obsessive-compulsive when it comes to prepping.”

“A bit? You were half right, you are obsessive-compulsive.”

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I feel that there are some things a person can’t have too much of, smoking materials if you smoke, coffee, toilet tissue and ammo. Fuels are nice too, especially if you use kerosene lamps. A few 25’ spare rolls of lamp wick will keep the lights on. Maybe that’s

what some call a *beans and bullets attitude*. As long as the generator would run, we'd have an operating system in the house between the electricity and propane for the stove, the propane for the refrigerator and electricity in the shelter for the other appliances.

The nearest Sam's Club was down in Springfield. The nearest Costco was in Independence and the nearest Wal-Mart in Lebanon although there were 50 stores within a 50 mile radius. Depending on how much we wanted to buy on a single trip, it was Lebanon, Springfield or Independence. For now, we'd continue double buying and buying sales items.

One other thing cropped up over the course of the past years, access to the internet. We opened an account with a provider in Lebanon and the kids used dialup for their school work. It had to be done at Mom and Dad's but they hadn't seemed to mind. Susan would be a senior this coming year and Bill a sophomore. Neither had expressed any interest in attending college. Susan had been dating a local boy for around 18 months and Sheena said they were thinking of marriage after Kent got on his feet financially. Bill's girlfriend was named Janet and Bill was considering trade school, wanting a job as a mechanic and hoping to go to work for a car dealer in Lebanon.

As a family, the Corbett's didn't much take to college and the only member of the extended family with a college education was Bill's wife, Cindy. The kids' grades were actually good enough that they might get scholarships which could change their plans from plan A to plan B. Plan B for Susan would be a degree in Elementary Education while plan B for Bill was a degree in agriculture. These days a scholarship came nowhere near covering the costs of a 4 year education, but there was student financing programs and Pell Grants.

Mom and Dad took the Lebanon Daily Record and we perused the want ads a day late looking for anything we could use. One ad caught my eye and opened a can of worms. It was for a used 12.5kw Quiet Diesel generator recovered from a badly damaged motor home. It had about 1,000 hours usage recorded and the asking price was \$4,000 OBO.

"Did you see the ad in the paper for the used generator?"

"I don't read the want ads as a rule; what about it?"

"Well, it's the same model as the one we have, has about 1,000 hours on it and they're asking \$4,000 OBO. I'd really like to buy it if you could see your way clear to helping by advancing us the money."

"But, you have a generator."

"Yes, of course we do. I think it's a case of where more is better."

“I’ll come with you to check it out. No promises, understand, but I suppose it’s worth a look.”

The generator was undamaged and the hour meter read 1,023. We started to dicker and got the price down to \$3,250. I let Dad know that the price, new, was around \$9,650 plus tax. He wrote the check and the 770-pound generator was loaded in the back of my pickup.

“This is coming out of your crop money this year Boston.”

“That’s fine Dad, Sheena and I discussed this in a general way and I pointed out that we’d have to be flexible when it came to adding to the diesel tank.”

“If the prices hold, between what you get for your hogs and your reduced share of the farm income, it should leave the two of you in good shape to finish up filling the tank. Knowing you as I do, you probably have another list of things you’d like to do.”

“As a matter of fact, I do. We’d like to get the freezer into the shelter for one thing. I need to install the bathroom, bedroom walls, enclosed the generators, add furniture and so forth.”

“I knew it. You have another two or three years of work to go on that shelter. I suggested a storm shelter and you built a 1,250ft² bomb shelter. I think you’re wrong, but should something happen, is there room for your Mother and me?”

“I planned on that from the beginning.”

“You did? You never said anything.”

“That’s because I felt you disapproved of what I was doing.”

“I did, but in case I was wrong, the used generator is on your Mom and me. That should help you get that diesel tank filled. What else do we need to get?”

“Are you sure that you want to get involved? I ask because some of the things we still need/want aren’t exactly cheap.”

“For instance?”

The Soddy – Chapter 3

“MSA Millennium gas masks with the CBRN filters at \$300 each, Tyvek suits at \$40 each, boots and gloves. Additional radiation detection equipment would include a CD V-717, CD V-700 and an AMP-200 very high range meter. We don't have any communications gear and should have an all band ham radio with a vertical antenna on a collapsible tower. For local communications, we could use the GMS/FRS radios, but they have very limited range and I'd prefer Motorola business radios.”

“How many people were you counting on?”

“That depends on when we need to use the shelter. Susan is already talking marriage when she graduates and Bill wants to go to tech school and get married after he has a good job. That could increase the body count from 6 to 8, or more if you have any great grandchildren.”

“Ok, I'll plan on 8 since it seems inevitable. It's going to take a while but your mother and I have a good retirement fund. A few years back we switched from stocks to gold and silver. Considering our age, we could pull the balance without penalties, but we've left it in and let it grow. This fund buys the metals, not metal stocks, and we could pull it out on short notice, 10 days. Maybe I should buy some of the firearms like the ones you have.”

“You can get a short barrel with rifle sights for your 870 and the shotgun is old enough that you can add a magazine extension without modifying the gun. You should consider a main battle rifle like the one I have. You can get the OEM magazines in Lebanon at half the price the rifle manufacturer charges for them, \$25 each instead of \$50 each. You already have the Colt M1911A1 and maybe you should think about another M1 carbine for Mom plus a Browning Hi-Power. You don't have to buy new if you can find good used guns.”

“I'll talk to your mother before I jump into this project too far. If she agrees, we'll do the best we can to help you finish equipping that shelter. But, I'll be praying we never have to use it. It is one heck of a storm shelter.”

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We had extraordinary receipts from the farm production this year and I had the diesel tank filled before I started working in Lebanon. The garden had produced a bumper crop and we had to buy more canning jars just to hold what Mom and Sheena canned. Every week, I brought home as many concrete blocks, as funds allowed, until all the block we needed was stacked and waiting installation. I also had the mortar, rebar and pre-mixed concrete to fill the blocks. The only item we lacked was road plate for an overhead.

New road plate was out of our reach, it's very expensive. Since we were only covering a 4' gap, Dad and I looked at alternatives. We decided on using OSB. We'd get several

sheets and laminate them into a 3" layer that should support a lot of weight. Considering various approaches to putting in a ramp, we decided on outside steps down to where the height would permit a vertical blast door. It was, we decided, okay if the ramp extended above the ground for a short way because we could cover that portion with the soil we'd excavate.

We got into the fields early, allowing us to begin excavating for the ramp. It would be a straight run and a bit steep with an 8' rise in a 44' run. Eight divided by 44 times 100 yielded an 18+% grade. It was nothing you'd drive a vehicle down or up and it would require a significant amount of work to raise or lower something down into the shelter. Work is the mechanical energy required to move a measurable weight a particular distance and includes consideration of the slope or change in elevation.

The bottom line was that we excavated a 6' wide slope, graded it as best we could using a water filled lawn roller, formed it and poured the concrete. Dad ordered the blast door from American Safe Rooms. When the concrete was set enough that we could lay the block, we did that, leaving the block wall in the vertical access in place pending installation of the blast door. We didn't receive the door until late July and immediately suspended our other activities to get it in place. Once done, we used a diamond saw to cut the concrete block and rebar to allow open access to the vertical 4' square that led to the steel door in the shelter.

We also had to take time off for Susan and Kent's wedding. They would be living in a one bedroom apartment in Lebanon. She decided that she would take her Browning and leave the remainder of her firearms in the shelter. Although she wasn't old enough for a CCW, she did have a Galco purse to carry the pistol in. Kent had accepted his father's offer of a job working construction and had worked the same job for the two previous summers. The firm kept busy with repair work during the winter, except when weather didn't permit, which wasn't often the case. The reception was held at the Moose Lodge. Sheena and I picked up most of the tab, with some help from Mom and Dad. Sheena cried and after I got the bill for the reception, I did too.

The actual shelter was complete except for the bedroom walls and furniture. The two generators had been mounted in a custom rack and connected to a DPDT switch. We could start the second, wait for it to stabilize and flip the switch. We could then allow the other unit to cool off, change the oil and filters and it would be ready to go when the other one needed an oil change. However, both Dad and I quickly realized that we had a problem – heat. We needed some way to remove the excess heat from the generator room.

Dad stood there for the longest time stroking his chin. He smiled and said, "No sweat, I've got. Is it okay to drill more holes in the lid?"

"Sure. What are you going to do?"

“Central air conditioning. In a normal house with a furnace and central air, there is an evaporator in the furnace that’s connected to a condenser and compressor outside the house. We can put in a system like that with a thermostat to control the temperature in the generator room. I’ve read the manual on that generator and it will handle 3 15,000BTU rooftop air conditioners.”

When Dad got involved in something, he went at it full bore. I began to detect a note of pride in his voice when he discussed how far we’d come since returning home. A quick summary would include the Soddy, the machine shed and barn plus the shelter, a commercial sized diesel tank, and about 6 times as much as we had when we moved.

Add to that a well-stocked armory, ample ammo except for the 7.62mm plus a married daughter and a son who would be a senior this year. The rooms in the shelter were simple framing with insulation for soundproofing, and ½” drywall and a pre-hung, hollow core door. When fall rolled around Dad deducted our share of the improvements and asked about an armory in the shelter.

“I didn’t build one; Sheena long ago suggested wall mounted rifle racks and pegs to hang our gun belts on. We don’t have any rug rats under foot and even if we did, they couldn’t reach the guns.”

“You’re going to need more oil and filters for the generators. I read the book and we need SAE 15w-40 plus oil, air and fuel filters. You have to change the oil and filter every 250 hours and the fuel filter and air filter every 500 hours. We’ll need 3 dozen oil filters and one drum of oil per year plus 18 air filters and fuel filters. How big of a supply would you recommend?”

“Two years for each generator. That assumes they’ll each last two years if we run them full time. I can’t imagine a case where we couldn’t get more over a 4 year period. If they have some sort of standard rebuild kit, maybe we should get two of those. By the way, you know not to spread news of our preparations around, right?”

“I’ve only mentioned it to your brothers and sister. Not that it will do much good with them living in St. Louis and Kansas City. When you get a chance, sit down and make a list of long term storage food.”

“I have that already. The one year deluxe unit from Walton Feed will feed one person for one full year. They cost around \$1,025 per unit plus shipping. It all a matter of how much we can afford. I was discussing buying 6 units with Sheena to cover us and the kids. Do you want in on that?”

“I suppose we ought to think about the others while we’re at it. That would amount to 14 units including 2 for your Mother and me. There’s nothing cheap when it comes to prepping is there?”

"I'm afraid not. That's one of the reasons it has taken so long to complete the shelter. In addition to 8 deluxe units we may buy 2 one year basic units so we have more grain products."

"Don't forget the ammo."

"I won't. Did you get those rifles?"

"We got everything except for 7.62mm ammo. We need to get busy on locating a source for that."

"Since the wars are basically over, I expect to see Lake City hit the market any day. It shouldn't take long to rebuild their regular supply and start dumping production overruns on the market."

"Have you been watching the news?"

"Yeah, like I have time."

"Make time and tell me what you think. Would it be possible to order the food from Walton and pick it up in person?"

"I don't see why not. Twenty two units plus 2 basic units would weigh around 9 tons and would require about 800ft³ of storage space if I am remembering what they said a few years back on their website."

"It's going to take all of the receipts from the harvest and livestock sales to pay for that."

"I know; that's why we've avoided buying from them until now. Still we have enough set back to feed the five of us for about 7 months and if you add Kent and Susan, probably 6 months. Some things still need to come from Sam's Club, Wal-Mart or Costco Foods up in Independence. Maybe we should all go up to KC and visit John. I could check with some friends I knew at Lake City and get the straight dope on ammo availability."

Two weeks later we left for Independence driving two pickups and pulling one trailer. Once there, we got another U-Haul on a one way rental. We visited with John and Marsha after we had our pickups and trailers full. I called my buddy about the ammo and he asked how much I wanted. I replied 10-12,000 rounds of M80. The low whistle told me it was going to be very expensive. It turned out to be less than I thought because all of the middlemen were eliminated but it still cost \$5,760 or 48 cents per round. We had two hundred cans of M80 on strippers, ten bandoleers per can. It was crammed everywhere including in the back seats, and on the trailers. Plus, the sale was on the up and up, overruns purchased from the plant.

The next item on the agenda was contacting Walton Feed and placing an order for pickup at their loading dock. For some undisclosed reason, Dad seemed to show a

sense of urgency. They'd even pulled their gold and silver from the retirement account and had it put away in the shelter. I could see nothing on the news concerning any potential disaster either natural or manmade. But I wasn't fool enough to dispute him concerning the matter.

The most economical approach to transport the order from Walton seemed to be renting a U-Haul truck and making a round trip. It was a trade off because it was more miles and more fuel but there wasn't the raised rate for a one-way rental or drop off charge. Plus we could take turns driving and go up and back nonstop. It was around 1,230 miles each way so we decided to stay over and get one night's sleep. We called before leaving and they said the order was ready to pick up.

Once we arrived, they provided pallet jacks to move the purchase into the truck from their loading ramp. When we finished up I paid for Sheena and my 8 deluxe and 2 basic units while Dad started counting out hundreds to pay for his 14 units. The money had a musky smell to it and looked as if it had been rolled up and stored in coffee cans. That possibly harkened back to the Great Depression where farmers lost everything when the banks went belly up.

After he had counted out the money, they then had to recount it although they had watched him counting it out. They paper clipped each package of ten Ben Franklins for ease of counting. Although I also paid cash, at least my money didn't smell moldy. And by the way, we were nearly broke, again. The things needed/wanted to finish of the shelter were beds, dressers, tables and chairs plus a used electric stove and the communications equipment Dad said he'd buy.

We studied together on weekends and both got general class amateur licenses and call signs. We include Dad, Mom, Sheena, Bill and me. While the FCC might not be around to complain during a disaster, you could be sure that the hams would unless you were licensed. Only Mom failed her exam and Sheena began to help her memorize the answers to the canned questions. She did pass the second time, leaving only Susan and Kent plus Bill's girlfriend Janet. She turned out to have a Technician's license and he helped her study for the General exam. We gave the CD to Susan and Kent and strongly suggested that they do the same.

We were just one year away from having our several year project completed. We were missing the communications gear and rifles for Kent and Janet plus pistols and ammo. We used a major share of the money I earned in Lebanon that winter to put radios in the vehicles and get the business radio license. Mom and Dad parted with a small portion of their gold coins to get the ham gear and additional business radios plus a collapsible Monopole.

Do you remember I said we needed/wanted horses? Mom and Dad had 4 geldings but to have a large enough herd for all of us; we need 4 more geldings and tack. An ad in the Lebanon Daily Record advertised 4 6year-old geldings for \$900 each without tack. Dad looked them over and bought them for 3 gold Eagles. The used tack ran another

Eagle and included the bridle, saddle, saddle bags and scabbards. To round out the tack, I purchase 4 used scabbards and lariats.

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“Do you know what I’d like to do?”

“What?”

“Climb up on the roof of the Soddy, give a one finger salute and tell the world to kiss my butt.”

“It can’t be that easy Boston, surely you’ve missed something.”

“We have to move the refrigerator and freezer to the shelter. I suppose we ought to buy Kent a set of cowboy guns, a main battle rifle and pistol.”

“I’ve made a list.”

“Am I rubbing off on you?”

“No way; my list includes 4 Marlin rifles, 2 Ruger Vaqueros, a standard model M1A and 2 Mossberg 590s. That will finish out the kid’s armories and includes Janet. You may not know it, but our son bought her a diamond engagement ring.”

“I thought he was going to finish tech school first.”

“He is but that doesn’t mean they can’t get engaged. Your father bought the things from that gas mask place with them in mind. One thing you didn’t mention was the extra radiation equipment.”

“It completely slipped my mind. Maybe I can buy the dosimeters and the 700 and 717 and Dad can buy the AMP-200.”

“You mean you don’t have it on a list?”

“I do somewhere; the problem is I can’t find the list.”

“That’s because I’ve got it. I found it and used it as a starting point. By the way, you forgot to add Beano to the list. Will any brand of coffee do or do you insist on Folgers?”

“I prefer Folgers but will drink most standard coffee except Starbucks.”

“On our trip to Kansas City, we bought 12 cases of 57 ounce cans with 12 cans per case.”

“Could you order two fifty pound bags of that cocoa mix from Walton? I really like that and it’s an excellent bedtime drink. Get some more of their rolled oats too, they’re really inexpensive. How much frozen orange juice do we have and pancake syrup? Enough I hope for all the pancake mixes we have.”

“Slow down, I’m making notes. I’ll order the cocoa and rolled oats and buy the syrup and orange juice from Wal-Mart if we’re short. Now, I have another question. What about furniture for the shelter?”

“I was thinking folding chairs, 8’ folding tables, 4 dressers and four queen sized beds, maybe something near the bottom of the line. We can run a line and put our TV down there with our DVD player and supply of movies. Plus we need a double basin kitchen sink.”

“I never asked; how did you manage to get the sewage to run up hill?”

“With a sewage pump. I put a small collection tank under the floor and pump it up to the septic tank.”

“Although the shelter is normally cool to cold, it warms up when I’m doing laundry. With 8 people down there it will get downright hot.”

“Dad installed the system to keep the generator room cold; maybe I can rig the same kind of system for the shelter. He used a 3 ton (36,000 BTU) system and I’ll do the same for the shelter proper. Did you give Susan a key to the shelter?”

“Yes, at the reception.”

“And Bill already has a key because I gave him one. I’ll get more made for Mom and Dad.”

“Explain something to me. You never once called your mother or father by their names. Why not?”

“My grandfather had a sense of humor too. Dad’s name is Francis Marion Corbett and Mom’s name is Esther Ruth Corbett (née Rabinowitz, a Christian Jew). Dad hates his name and Mom much prefers being called Ruth. It’s far easier to call them Mom and Dad.”

“Well, that explains that.”

“Explains what?”

“Why her chicken soup is so good.”

“You mean her Jewish penicillin? It is good, why don’t you try and get her recipe?”

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Although Mom readily gave Sheena the recipe she used, Sheena's soup wasn't Mom's soup. I suspected that Mom had altered the recipe and failed to note the changes. The campaigns to elect the next president next year were already in full swing. The Republican front runner was Bobby Jindal. The Democratic front runner was irrelevant to me and three different candidates claimed the lead. There was something about Jindal that bothered me; something I couldn't put my finger on.

The economy was, well, the economy; neither really good nor totally bad. The government had spent trillions trying to reverse it without much result. Some of the busts repaired themselves without government intervention, which led to inflation. We hadn't been on the dole for perhaps 5 years, except for medical care. But then the only serious injury or illness had been when Bill broke his arm.

The government money had succeeded in repairing some of the infrastructure, like roads and bridges, but failed to reduce our demand for fossil fuels. The solar and wind energy projects were, at best behind schedule and, at worst unattainable. The clean coal movement, conversely, was having much more success and if there was one thing the country wasn't short on, it was coal.

While a person can never be totally prepared, we were about as prepared as one family could be; for anything, tornado, earthquake, the Deep Impact and Yellowstone. In the event of a biological or chemical attack, the ventilation would scrub the air to eliminate toxins. At Dad's suggestion, we acquired several bundles of sandbags, filled them and stacked them by the Soddy's windows. By virtue of having 16" of sod in the exterior walls, the Soddy had a built in radiation protection factor, something that Dad picked up on that I had overlooked.

The summer of 2016 was very good to us in many ways. With ample water and sunshine, the field crops and garden produced huge surpluses. Because we kept the heifer's and most of the gilt's, our little herd of cows and hogs had grown to the point that Sheena and I had an average of 300 market weight hogs and about 30 market weight steers and heifers to sell. Combined with the farm income, our returns far outstripped anything I might have earned in Independence working at the Lake City plant.

Our chicken operation had grown too and we produced enough eggs that we sold both eggs and the surplus milk to the dairy. We had acquired a third generator to power the milking equipment and a second used tank, 10,000-gallons this time, which was filled with diesel and used to power that genset.

Dad was talking retirement and brought up us running the farm for him on shares. The main difference would be that the shares would be 75% for us and 25% for Mom and him. The four of us had left the farm years before because none of had wanted to be farmers. For half the year, you worked from before dawn to well past dusk; and, for the

other half you have time on your hands after tending to the livestock. Farming was and is a risky business. Water is important; sometimes you have too little while other times, you have too much. The plants require sunshine and cloudy weather can have serious consequences if you have too much. About the only thing on a farm that doesn't have some kind of major hazard attached to it is gathering eggs.

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That fall, the Republican candidate who wasn't Bobby Jindal, won by a sizable margin. He was a conservative of the Reagan bent and someone most of us hadn't heard of until the campaign season. He took 54% of the vote and in Congress the Senate ended up 63% Republican while the House was 61% Republican. Those were clear majorities, yet lacked a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority to overturn any vetoes. The first piece of legislation requested by the White House was a tax cut and with it, elimination of some of the nanny state programs of the past 8 years.

The Nuclear Threat Initiative program run by Lugar and Nunn had been warning for years about nuclear proliferation with limited success. Down on the farm, we were ready, just in case. With both children out of school, married and living in Lebanon and Mom and Dad still living in the farm house and us in the Soddy neither Sheena nor I was too worried about something over which we had no control. We still made an annual trip to Independence to shop at Costco and I'd buy ammo from my friend who worked at Lake City.

Although we preferred geldings for riding, we had 3 mares and a stallion thus the means to expand Dad's herd of horses. In March of 2017, we hadn't made a decision about running the farm on shares. It appeared to be too much work for a single individual because Dad had his own herd of hogs and dairy herd. I doubted I could deal with milking 60 cows, caring for 60 sows and all of the related chores and still find time to till, plant and harvest the fields.

Besides, as the economy slowly improved and the markets began to recover, the price of gold and silver coins dropped to a level where they actually became a good investment. Much of our extra income had been invested in the hard currency. A little here, a little there, but it really added up. What was good for us had an opposite effect on Dad. He'd held his PMs watching them rise and then fall in value. It wasn't that bad, he still had more than his initial investment, but still...

"Dad, I'll be honest, Sheena and I haven't decided what to do with regard to running the farm. Your offer is generous and appealing. That said, I think it's too much work for one person."

"I agree Boston, you've have to sell off half of the livestock after merging the herds. I never thought you might try running the farm with double the livestock I had."

"If I could get a hired hand, it might be different. Are you up to farming one more year and holding off on retiring?"

"We could stand to pad our checkbook, sure. That is if we have another year of farming."

"What are you talking about?"

"I am talking about the state of the world we find ourselves in. You should watch the news more often. Not only do we have all of the previous problems, we have some new ones. Although they never were able to tie that nuclear weapons test to Iran, it's pretty certain it was them. That made ten nuclear powers, including Israel. On top of that, Iraq is believed to be working on a new reactor to replace the one Israel destroyed, Osiraq."

"Will Israel destroy that one too?"

"Who knows? They might, but since Saddam has been dead for over ten years, maybe not. It may depend on what the Mossad learns about the reactor."

"So, you're recommending getting the radiation instruments recalibrated?"

"I most certainly am."

"Have you talked to the others about this?"

"Do you mean your siblings? Yes, I have and none of them believe it will actually come to a GTW. Susan and William dismissed my suggestions. John said that I might have a point but he had his own backyard shelter with enough food for three months."

"Would that help if someone hit Kansas City?"

"I doubt it. Well, I don't really know, it would depend on where a warhead detonated with regard to where they live."

"If someone hits Kansas City, I'm sure they'd hit St. Louis too."

"True. They're adults and we can't force them. I just hope when it happens the move will be telegraphed on the news and they'll have a chance to come down here."

Sheena and I had seen John's shelter on one trip to Independence. It was homemade from a 10' diameter culvert 50' long and equipped with a battery bank, small generator, LTS food and sleeping for 8. I'd seen a similar shelter at Utah Shelter Systems but don't know if he bought the equipment from them or American Safe Rooms. His only radios were an old mobile CB and a transistor AM/FM radio.

The Soddy – Chapter 4

A nuke, if properly placed, could take out Kansas City, Independence and the Lake City plant.

We now had a steady flow of income due to the milk and egg sales. It wasn't a lot, but it covered the costs of keeping the fuels topped off. I was still driving our old non electronic diesel pickup and it was getting long in the tooth. I wanted a new pickup but held off, especially after Dad and I had that talk about a possible GTW. I still had the winter job in Lebanon although I had managed to work myself well above minimum wage. That was another consideration about Sheena and me running the farm, the lost income.

This past Christmas we spent the money to provide the firearms on the list that Kent and Janet lacked. Her rifle was a target model Mini-14 with the Black Hogue stock, heavy barrel and 20-round Ruger magazines. His was a standard model M1A. Sheena covered that list earlier so there's no need to repeat it. We had ample supplies of ammo and gave them some of our stock. All of the Vaqueros were in .357 or .45 Colt caliber and the Marlin rifles were either 1894C or 1895 Cowboys, depending on the gender of the recipient. Females got .357s and males got .45 Colts and .45-70-405 rifles.

At our Independence Day picnic, Bill had a dour look. Janet was engrossed in a discussion with Sheena and her body language suggested something serious.

"How's that job going Bill?"

"It's not going Dad, it's gone. There was a 90 day probationary period and I thought I was doing good work. Apparently the owner disagreed and the job is history. I have no idea what we're going to do now."

"Let me throw out a thought to you and you give me your honest reaction. Dad talked to me about taking over the entire farm so he could retire. I had to tell him no because the size of this operation is just too much for a single individual. However, if your mother and I moved into the big house with them, Janet and you could move into the Soddy and run our operation on shares."

"How big of a share?"

"The same split as Dad offered me, 75% for you and us and 25% for Dad."

"When do I start?"

"As soon as your grandfather and I discuss it and make the arrangements."

"Discuss what with me?"

“Bill lost his job and I suggested that we could move into the big house with you and take over your operation. They would move into the Soddy and take over our operation on the same share arrangement you offered me.”

“I’ll run it by your mother and if she agrees, it’s a go.”

“Almost; I still have to run it by Sheena and get her agreement.”

“I suppose I need to talk to Janet, huh?”

“Might be a good idea Bill. It’s all that I have to offer and there are certain advantages.”

“Good and bad dad, I don’t know how she’ll like living without electricity.”

“You did it, as did we all. It’s not like there aren’t appliances, they’re just in unusual places. If you say yes, you will be responsible for keeping the tanks topped off.”

Bill had taken technical training to be a diesel engine mechanic and if I were any judge, was good at it. That might or might not prove to be beneficial; we had purchased 3 rebuild kits for the generators which were all the same 12.5kw Quiet Diesel model HDKCB.

Later that afternoon I talked to Sheena and she agreed with my suggestion because it was basically what we had done. She told me that Janet had explained the situation but was at a loss for a solution. Sheena would have another word with Janet. Dad had talked to Mom, over the ice cream I guess, and since the house had 4 bedrooms, Mom was most agreeable. By the time we got around to ‘fireworks time’, it was all agreed. We would move our things to the big house and later in the month, Bill and Janet would move theirs to the Soddy. Anything in the shelter stayed in the shelter.

Janet told Sheena that she had never seen herself as being a pioneer and Sheena said the feeling was mutual. However, over the years, she was more comfortable here on the farm than she had ever been in Independence, her home town.

I built a machine shed as my first building after the Soddy. I think that I had misnamed the building because we didn’t have any machinery. What little work there was on our 40 acres was accomplished using Dad’s equipment. The building wasn’t unused; it turned into a very large storage building. I could store extra grain, hay or other livestock feed or even extra people food. I hadn’t wired the shed at first, but after we acquired the second generator, I strung a line of 8/3 to power appliances. We watched the want ads and when we saw a 25ft³ chest freezer for sale, cheap, we bought it and added it to the machine shed. Although it needed a repair, given the price we paid plus the repair cost, we gained another freezer for about 1/3 the cost of a new one.

Beginning on August 1st, Bill took over what I was doing and I took over what Dad was doing. We decided on half shares, ergo, the farm income would be divided equally in a

three-way split. Sheena and I left all of the food we had, except for some items like the cocoa and rolled oats, for Bill and Janet. Dad didn't have a Gunsmoke rifle rack, preferring a gun safe. We used that instead of sticking our firearms in our closet. We had a choice, loaded in the safe or unloaded in the closet. Thinking that the safe provided nearly instant access, we opted for the latter; except for our pistols which were kept unloaded on our closet shelf.

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"Did you hear that news report?"

"What news report?"

"The TV is on, go watch it. It's the Fox News channel. It doesn't sound good to me."

Fox News was reporting that our new president had ordered all 5 Pacific Aircraft Carriers to sortie with their Strike Groups. The Nimitz would be held in reserve in Hawaii and the remainder spread out in the South China Sea. Taiwan had just declared independence and the People's Republic was less than happy. However, they gave Taiwan a week to change their minds or China would attack the Republic of China. Could they get the Groups ready to sail that fast?

The distance from San Diego to Taipei, Taiwan is 6889 miles (11086 km) (5986 nautical miles). Assuming for the sake of argument that a Carrier can steam at 35 knots, 24 hours per day, the time to get there from San Diego would be ~171 hours. The Carriers based in the Seattle area had to travel 6042 miles (9724 km) (5251 nautical miles) and could make the journey in ~151 hours. Would 6.29 days make much difference when compared to 7.125 days? Yes, ~20 hour's difference. However, the top speed of an Arleigh Burke was around 31 knots and it had a maximum range of 4,400NM at 20 knots. The Ticonderoga cruisers had a top speed of an excess of 30 knots and an undisclosed range. The bottom line was that they would have to refuel the Carrier escorts before they got to Taiwan. A formation of ships can't sail any faster than the slowest ship in the group. (An argument favoring powering the escort ships with nuclear power.)

However, that didn't take into consideration the George Washington that was stationed in Yokosuka, Japan. Yokosuka is at the mouth of Tokyo Bay and the approximate distance was 1303 miles (2097 km) (1132 nautical miles). Which at 35 knots, could be covered in 32 hours or in 56.6 hours at a more sedate pace of 20 knots.

"Are Bill and Janet settled in?"

"They sure are."

"Don't you think you'd better talk to Kent and Susan and suggest they live in the Soddy with Bill and Janet until this thing sorts itself out?"

“Do you want to ride along?”

“When are you going?”

“Now, they should be finishing up supper.”

“Do you think Kent will take this seriously?”

“He may not, but everyone knows who really wears the pants in a family. Susan most surely will, if for no other reason than as a precaution because she’s expecting.”

“They finally figured out how to make a baby?”

“I think they held off for a while. You’d have to ask Sheena, not me.”

“If they come out, that should ease the transition for Janet.”

“You’re right, I hadn’t considered that. Besides, should it turn into an extended stay, there are 3 bedrooms, one for a nursery.”

“If there is anything you need Boston, you’d better get it while we’re in town.”

“We’ll go by Smoker’s Outlet and see if they’ll sell to me. The cigarettes have all the tax stamps, so I don’t see why not, unless it might be the sales tax.”

“Filthy habit. Are you going to stock up?”

“They might be as good as gold.”

“Or, get very stale.”

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“So kids, that’s the long and short of it. There’s a good chance that the Republic of China will tell the People’s Republic of China to stuff it and most of our Carrier Strike Groups will be in the region to back their play.”

“Kent, pack a bag and get our things in the car, we’re going out to the Soddy.”

“But Susan, I’ll have to commute.”

“So? See my fingers moving? That’s the world’s smallest record player playing ‘I’ll Cry For You’. Move it, I’ll get my things.”

He frowned but he neither said no dear nor yes dear. Kent just got his things and loaded them into the car. Their canned goods and staples were piled in the trunk and on top of

the things in the back seat. He had to move all of the heavy stuff because of her condition. Dad and I would have helped, but he refused to ask and we didn't want to get in the way. The last thing she did was clean out their refrigerator and put the things in a picnic basket which ended up in the back of my pickup along with their firearms. I told them we'd see them at the farm because I had one stop to make. The cigarette wholesaler's hours were 8-5, but there was a light on so I pounded on the door.

"I want..."

"I know what you want. What brand and how many cartons?"

"I didn't think you'd sell to me."

"I been selling off the inventory since around 3pm, this war thing has everyone nervous. You're lucky I have a sales tax permit and a retail seller's permit. Brand?"

"Kool's 100s, box."

"An oddball, huh? Now I have a full case of those."

"How much per carton?"

"\$28."

"Well, \$28 times 30 equals \$840 plus tax."

"Times 2, there are 60 cartons to the case. \$1,680 plus 7.225% tax equals, um, \$1,801.38. Call it \$1,800 even. Can do?"

"Yeah, but my hundreds won't smell musty."

Dad gave me a rather sharp look but didn't comment. On the way home neither of us brought it up. However, once we got home, he said, "I don't bury it anymore. I keep it in the lockbox in the gun safe."

"Lockbox, hell; that's more like a portable metal file."

"Hard to pick up too; the gold and silver is in there. I moved it out of the shelter."

Then, I remember him having the metal file box in the room assigned to them as their bedroom. I hadn't tried to pick it up but my curiosity overcame me and I went to the gun safe and tried. It felt like it must weigh 30 pounds or more and was awkward so I didn't succeed. Did Dad really have 360 ounces of gold or had he added lead to weigh the box down? Maybe a lot of the weight was silver...

Sheena and I only had 12 one ounce Eagles, 24 ½ ounce Eagles, 48 ¼ ounce Eagles and 120 tenth ounce gold Eagles (4 troy pounds or 48 troy ounces or ~3.3 pounds). It was different when it came to the silver Eagles, we had 240 troy ounces. All those silver coins (~16.45 pounds) were worth a fraction of the value of our gold holdings, assuming a 50:1 ratio.

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“Fox News just reported that the George Washington has arrived on scene and is station keeping.”

“What does that mean? In this case it means patrolling a defined sector in relation to a fixed object, the island of Taiwan.”

What about the other Carriers?”

“They didn’t say Boston. They mentioned that all 20 B-2 bombers were moved to Guam.”

“It’s just a shame we don’t still have the Nighthawks.”

“Funny you should say that; they flew all 52 of them from Area 51 to Hawaii and on to Guam. They were semi-retired, apparently, and maintained in a ready status if needed. Before you ask, they sent all of the F-22 and F-35 fighters to Guam too.”

“All of them? That’s about 180 F-22s and I don’t know how many F-35s. I thought they took the wings off the Nighthawks.”

“Maybe I misunderstood or maybe Glenn Beck got it wrong. Even Glenn Beck isn’t perfect. He was complaining about the Air Force not building more F-22s when they had the chance. Between him and Bill O’Reilly, Barney Frank doesn’t have a friend left in the world.”

“He shouldn’t. When do the other Carriers arrive?”

“Four or five days.”

“Can one Carrier Strike Group hold the Chinese at bay?”

“I don’t know, but I doubt it. When the two arrive from Bremerton, the Lincoln and Stennis, our chances will improve dramatically. After the Reagan arrives from San Diego we’ll have all four on scene and one in ready reserve.”

“What’s the Steaming time from Pearl?”

“Well, it’s around 5053 miles (8131 km) (4391 nautical miles) at 35 knots or about 125 hours. Maybe they’ll move the Nimitz to Yokosuka instead. That would cut it down to about 57 hours.”

“Will we have anything guarding our west coast?”

“Los Angeles class submarines. They held off retiring a few so we have 22 still in commission on the west coast. They’re stationed at Pearl, San Diego and Guam. I figure maybe 12 of those will be sailing with the Strike Groups leaving the other 10 guarding the coast.”

“Los Angeles class or I class?”

“Yeah, some of both.”

“How’s it going?”

“Oh, hi Kent. We were discussing having all of our Carrier Strike Groups defending Taiwan and what that meant in terms of protecting our west coast.”

“Are all of the Carriers over there?”

“At least 4 of the 5 west coast carriers are and despite reports that the Nimitz was going to Hawaii, we were speculating that they may have sent it to Yokosuka.”

“Where’s that?”

“For the sake of simplicity, Tokyo.”

“And all the other ships go with the Strike Groups?”

“Yes, they’re escorts.”

“Then who is protecting America?”

“Our Los Angeles class submarines.”

“Like the one in Red October, the Dallas?”

“Yes, the Dallas is one of the original class 688 subs. Its homeport is Groton. The subs on the west coast available for duty are a mix of 688s and 688Is.”

“Is this going to mean war?”

“Kid, I hope not. The problem with situations like this is that it only takes one little mistake for it to go to hell in a heartbeat. Somebody launches a missile at the wrong target

or maybe someone miscalculates a missile path and launches an interceptor like a SM-2. Neither high tech equipment nor people are perfect. We shot down an Iranian civilian airliner with a missile from an Aegis Cruiser, the Vincennes.”

“What’s the closest we ever came to a nuclear war?”

“That’s debatable but I think the Cuban Missile Crisis in ’62 when SAC was at DEFCON 2. There were other incidents, we were responsible for two and the USSR was responsible for one. Each problem was solved before missiles were launched. I suppose our people got medals but the Russian lost his job for failure to follow proper procedures. In addition to the Cuban Missile Crisis, there was the NORAD false alarm in ’79, the false US first Strike Alarm that that Russian Lt. Colonel, Petrov, got canned for, Exercise Able Archer in ’83 and the Norwegian Rocket incident in ’95,” Dad explained.

“Which one scared you the most?”

“I wasn’t around for the Cuban Missile Crisis and we usually didn’t hear about the others until much later. Ask Dad, I’ll bet he’ll say Cuba.”

“Yeah, it was Cuba; Kennedy came on the TV and addressed the nation. You can go to Wiki and look up his speech. Try searching on the Cuban Missiles Crisis.”

“No thanks, I’m not sure I want to know. But, we will know soon won’t we?”

“Just as soon as the Chinese deadline expires, unless I miss my guess. The thing about it is it may go way beyond China verses the US. North Korea will side with China and could invade South Korea. China could launch on Pakistan and/or India; or, the Chinese just might send a few Russia’s way.”

“What’s our alert status?”

“They don’t announce that until after the fact. There are several situations involved, the Defense Condition or DEFCON, the Threat Condition or THREATCON plus the Navy’s Material Conditions ranging from X-RAY to ZEBRA denoting the degree of hull integrity plus you have the underway conditions ranging from IV, normal conditions to I or General Quarters. When a Naval vessel is at General Quarters, it is also at Material Condition Zebra. Understand?”

“No really, but you can explain it as it comes up. Is there someplace to shoot? I have all of these new weapons the same as Janet and neither one of us was much into shooting.”

“Tomorrow right after chores; unless you’re working weekends.”

“Tomorrow would be good.”

◦

Tomorrow after chores must have two definitions, the rural version aka 7am and the city version aka 9am. Kent and Janet were both up early and came with our kids at 8 for breakfast. I couldn't help it, I thought of the scene in the movie Patton where he said, "From now on, you will open at six, and no man will be admitted after six-fifteen. Where are your leggings?" "Leggings? Oh hell, General Sir, I'm a cook." "You're a soldier. Twenty dollar fine."

Approximately 5 days later, our Carrier Strike Groups and escorts were in position. It was probably the largest assembly of Naval Sea Power since WW II. Give or take a sub or two, Dad had correctly estimated the submarine force supporting the Task Force. China let the deadline slip a day and then two more.

◦

A ship has a standard speed. This usually represents the fastest the ship is sailed. Above standard is full speed and flank speed. Full speed is limited and flank speed reserved for emergencies. For every hour a carrier sails at flank speed, it will take extra time to repair and refit the carrier due to wear and tear on the drive components. Even full speed will require additional refit.

"Flank speed is a nautical term referring to a ship's true maximum speed, beyond the speed that can be reached by traveling at full speed. Usually, flank speed is reserved for situations in which a ship finds itself in imminent danger, such as coming under attack by aircraft. Flank speed is very fuel-inefficient and often unsustainable because of engine overheating issues.

"By way of example, the specification for the Littoral combat ship states that the most economic speed of this LCS is 20 knots (giving a range of 4300 nautical miles). This ship has a flank speed of 50 knots, or 93 km/h (58 mph) but can only go 1,500 nautical miles (2,800 km) at this speed. Thus, its flank speed consumes fuel ~3 times faster than standard speed."

◦

We didn't know it at the time but our satellites detected the Chinese D-5A ICBMs being prepared for launch. Their other ICBMs, both models solid fueled, were the DF-31 and DF-41 and didn't require fueling, just the flip of a switch to send them on their way. As a massive rocket barrage began to pound Taiwan, The Chinese launched their entire missile inventory at the US, Russia, India and Pakistan.

Russia immediately responded with Topol M missiles and India launched half of their inventory at China and the other half at Pakistan. Pakistan retaliated against both. A short time later, Iran launched its three missiles at Israel and Israel responded with Jericho III missiles and a large flight of nuclear armed F-16s plus F-15s flying Air Cap. Their

targets were the many different nuclear sites in Iran and one nuclear site under construction in Iraq. They successfully intercepted two of the three Iranian missiles with Arrow missiles with the third failing to launch successfully. Their strikes were well planned and contained to nuclear sites, bombing each one with a single fusion weapon with a 150kT yield.

Neither the UK nor France launched any missiles. Russia responded by launching missiles on China and the United States with China receiving far more hits than we did. The US launched the B-2 bombers from Guam carrying B-83 bombs with the yield set at 1.2mT. The Nighthawks, which couldn't deliver nuclear weapons, were held in reserve and the twenty B-2s were each escorted by flights of 4 F-22s, headed to China. The US also had two boomers well within range of China waiting for instructions to release their missiles. Our F/A-18s didn't have the problem the Nighthawk did and could deliver 2 B-61/10 nukes set to maximum yield of 350kT.

The initial attacks came during the early morning hours in China. Beijing is GMT+8 and Missouri is GMT-6, a 14 hour difference, give or take an hour to allow for Daylight Savings Time. Since we were 14 hours behind China, a 5am attack from them would arrive about thirty minutes later in the US or 11:30am of the previous day from China's point of view. The early morning Sunday strike hit the US a half hour before lunch time on Saturday. Our NOAA radio went off first, alerting us and we turned on the TV to catch the last bit of the announcement that we had incoming missiles. The report repeated. As soon as we heard it all, all hell broke loose.

In the space of 20 minutes, the livestock was given extra feed, the watering systems checked and things we needed loaded into the pickup. Sheena called the kids on the radio and told them to open the shelter and this was no drill. Radios on slide mounts had been pulled from vehicles, an ignition wire removed to keep them from being stolen and the house and Soddy locked up tight. Once we were all in the shelter and locked in, I hooked up my transistor radio to the antenna on the monopole after disconnecting and grounding the other radios. After around 10 minutes of the radio repeating the same message, it screeched and died.

"What was that?"

"It was an electromagnetic pulse (EMP), either from a high altitude detonation or a weapon hitting a target. I doubt they hit Whiteman since all of the B-2s are in Guam. It was probably a high altitude EMP (HEMP) to take down our infrastructure. The game's afoot."

"Some game."

The Soddy – Chapter 5

“I was just quoting Shakespeare. Dad suggested getting our radiation gear recalibrated, but I realized that we hadn’t had it that long. It could have been in Texas and North Dakota instead of here when we need it. Watches will be assigned to monitor the radiation readings. Record both the AMP 200 reading and the CD V-717 reading every 15 minutes until I tell you to stop. If the country gets nuked, we’ll probably get radiation from Colorado. That’s a long way so it shouldn’t be too high unless they nuke Wichita.”

“Wichita?”

“It’s the largest city in Kansas and the *Air Capital of the World*. It has a population of nearly ½ million and would be a perfect target.”

“How do you know all this stuff?”

“I read, Kent. The most informative source on the web is, uh was, Wiki. I got the plans for the Soddy off Wiki back in 2009. You kids are lucky; nothing in the Soddy requires electricity.”

“And yet you have 3 generators?”

“We do and we’re going to need them because the power won’t come back on for years. Thinking ahead, we’ll have to figure out how to make cheese from our milk and hope like hell the tractors don’t breakdown. I think maybe Bill can work on them if they do and we can get the parts.”

“Don’t get ahead of yourself Boston. First, we have to get through the shelter stay and then we’ll have to see if any of our livestock made it.”

“Is your first name really Boston?”

“It’s part of my name that Dad always uses. My full name is Thomas P. Boston Corbett.”

“What’s the P stand for?”

“Dad?”

“I never found out, Boston. But I’d heard his birth name was Thomas P. Corbett. I guess it’s just an initial. Another source said his middle name began with an H. Either way, your birth certificate only has the P and not a full middle name.”

Much of what I related previously was unknown at the time. It would be pieced together over a period of years using our HF radio and filled in from conversations with soldiers, much later.

“Well Boston, it’s up to you and me for now.”

“What is Dad?”

“Tending to the livestock, gathering the eggs, checking everything for radiation; you know, just the usual chores in a Post-Apocalyptic World (PAW).”

I guess that made sense, Dad was old enough that it wouldn’t matter if he got cancer in ten years because he’d probably be dead before that. Sheena and I had all the kids we wanted, with a grandchild on the way, and I hoped to get lucky. We had the suits, masks, boots and gloves plus dosimeters and the CD V-700 and CD V-715 portable survey meters. The fallout didn’t start right away.

Wichita is 257 miles (413 km) (223 nautical miles) from Lebanon as the crow flies and the wind blows. The prevailing wind speed was 10mph, give or take. Around 24 hours after we heard the radio squeal, the CD V-717 started to show a rising radiation level. It eventually maxed out at 70R. I got out the spreadsheet and began plugging. I determined that a radiation level of 3,000R 24 hours earlier in Wichita would account for that level reaching us. However it was only intended, according to the guy who programmed it, to approximate when it was safe to leave the shelter.

According to the spreadsheet, we’d be below 5R in 232 hours, below 1R in 907 hours and below 0.1R in 6,352 hours or almost 9 months in the future. It would be nearly 16 months before our grandchild would see the light of day at 50mR. At 5R, Dad and I could leave the shelter very briefly, to feed the livestock and gather eggs. We decided to discard the eggs rather than risk ingesting anything radioactive. We went out once a day, for 30 minutes only. The maximum allowed daily exposure was 2.5R and as time passed, we could have stayed out longer but chose not to. The confinement proved to be the greatest challenge for those of us who weren’t allowed to leave the shelter, everyone except Dad and me.

We were bored beyond tears when Susan went into labor. Mom had a good idea what to do and Sheena and Janet could help her. Fifteen hours later, we had our first grandchild, a girl, who taped out around 19” and weighed roughly 7 pounds or a little less. Susan said the little girl would be named Sheena Ruth Jensen. Kent said his folks had a shelter that his father had his construction crews build back in 2010 or 2011. Janet was living with her aunt Jane when she married Bill because her mother and father were in a car accident in Kansas City that killed her father and left her mother in permanent vegetative state. Her aunt didn’t have a bomb shelter but did have a basement.

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With that bit of excitement out of the way, the kids only had 9 months to go before the radiation reached 50mR. When the radiation level was at 94mR not quite three months after Sheena was born, Mom and Sheena joined Dad and me and we began hosing everything down and washing the radiation away from the Soddy and our buildings. We

followed that by doing the same up at the main farm. The risk Dad and I took tending to the livestock paid off; we didn't lose any although pregnant animals aborted.

We moved some of our stored food from the machine shed to the shelter refreshing some shelter stores. Kent and Bill both insisted on leaving the shelter with the level at 94mR, the same time the women joined us to clean up the fallout. The boys helped with that for a few days and then Kent insisted on going to Lebanon to check on his folks. His father didn't have an amateur band radio. They went armed, with their pistols, rifles and shotguns as backup.

"How were your folks?"

"They're not doing so well. They ran out of food and Dad had to go salvaging from the neighborhood. He found enough to keep Mom and him going, but got too much exposure in the process. Assuming the radiation level in town was close to what we had here, what was the level when he went out?"

"When did he go out?"

"At three months, that's all the food they had."

"The level would have been slightly over 300mR per hour. The maximum allowable stay would have been about 8 hours per day."

"He was out longer than that."

"We'll put together some food for your parents so they can stay in the shelter. Bill and you can take it in tomorrow. If your father's total exposure was less than 50R, his chances of cancer are low. Since he's alive his total exposure couldn't have exceeded 300R."

What I told Kent was mostly true. There was a reported case of a man receiving an exposure of 7 Grays (700R) over a period of time and he survived. His wife, who received 5.7 Grays over a much shorter period, died. While the Gray is equal to 100 Rads, the Sievert is equal to 100 REM. The Röntgen (R) refers to a measure of ionizing radiation, the Rad is Röntgen Absorbed Dose and the REM is Röntgen Equivalent Man which considers the biological efficiency of the Rad. All of our equipment was calibrated in R. It's very confusing.

Not only did we have Kent's parents to think about, there was Janet's Aunt Jane. Bill checked on her and she had cobbled together a shelter of sorts in the basement and was living on her large supply of canned goods, eating them cold. We had a family meeting and decided to bring those 3 people out here and put them in the shelter. Mom and Dad plus Sheena and I would move out of the shelter to make room.

All 60 cows had dried up so the only milk we had was the milk stored in our LTS supplies. Mom had a case of Carnation evaporated milk on the shelf for cooking. There is also Nestle evaporated milk (Carnation), PET evaporated milk (the original) and various condensed milk products. Condensed milk is cow's milk from which water has been removed and to which sugar has been added, yielding a very thick, sweet product that can last for years without refrigeration if unopened. Borden and Eagle come to mind. One of the supplies Susan had included was Enfamil, just in case.

So, instead of taking Kent's parents food, we brought them here along with the huge Winnebago motorhome; the 2009 Vectra with slide out. It could sleep four in a pinch because of the sofa bed. It was diesel powered and Bill was able to get it running without difficulty. Coming out of Lebanon, we grew a tail. Jane was riding with Kent's parents in the motorhome and the four of us in Dad's pickup slowed our pace allowing the motorhome to get to the farm without being observed.

At the beginning of a convenient curve in the road, Dad parked the pickup crossways and we dismounted, bringing our rifles to bear. The old car skidded to halt and began to back up. Dad and I shot out the front tires making the car hard to control at low speeds. The driver and front seat passenger plus one rear seat passenger bailed out, carbines in hand. From this distance, we couldn't tell if they were AR15s or M16s. There was a National Guard Armory in Lebanon.

The first 3-round burst eliminated any doubt. They seemed to be inexperienced shooters with big boy toys. Four shots rang out from our end and the three men went down. We added a second round to the two who had only been shot once, just for good measure. Satisfied they were down for the count; we replaced our rifles with our shotguns and approached the bodies. One of the three was still alive, but bleeding out rapidly. Bill and Kent collected their weapons while Dad and I checked over the car. The trunk and half of the back seat was full of loot. We found liquor, cigarettes, more M16s, extra magazines, two cases of Wolf 5.56 ammo, and a total of 6 M9 pistols with extra magazines plus an open case of Fiocchi 150gr 7.62 FMJ Ammo.

Dad looked at me and I returned his stare, was this how it was going to be in the PAW? We pushed their vehicle off to the side of the road and returned to Lebanon, to clean out the Armory and check local stores for ammo that would fit any of our assorted firearms. When we got into that part of town, it became evident that many people had failed to shelter for a sufficient period of time. There was an ample supply of bodies to testify to that fact, many with signs of radiation poisoning. Some places had been picked over and others totally ignored.

The Armory was mostly ignored and we took all of the weapons and magazines we could find, to prevent them from being used against us. We moved to stores that sold ammo, including Wal-Mart which also sold food. The gun cases were empty and some of the ammo gone, but we took the rest. A glance at the food aisles suggested that there was more food than we could haul in Dad's pickup so we left Bill and Kent to

guard the store and Dad and I went looking for a trailer. We got the big enclosed U-Haul trailer and took it back to Wal-Mart and filled it up.

In addition to food, we took an assortment of clothing, especially baby clothing favoring pink plus some children's jeans and assorted shoes. Since there would be a dearth of finished goods for some time to come, we made a point to load up on all kinds of clothing and footwear. Finished for the moment, we returned to the farm.

"Where have you been? We've been worried out of our minds!"

"We picked up a tail coming out of town and had to attend to that. It made us realize that we might need to do some shopping while we could. The trailer and pickup are in the storage shed. We'll need to sort through the things, determine what we missed and go back tomorrow. Armed. You could have radioed; Dad has a Yaesu in his pickup plus the business radio."

It was late in the evening when we finished sorting; from that came two lists: things that we'd missed and things we hadn't considered. Feminine hygiene and sewing material were high on one list along with more food, while propane, lamp wicks, kerosene, gasoline and diesel fuel were high on the other. The latter list also included checking for more ammo, for self-defense, and fuel stabilizers. Dad said that we needed to corner the market on ammo, as much as possible, because it would be a good trade item and we would have some control over who got it.

We spent the next 3 weeks making trips into Lebanon, dodging bullets, salvaging, or looting if you prefer. We can call it a recovery effort if that sounds better. We picked up a few other weapons, taking them from their cold, dead hands. Nobody we killed for weapons, just some NRA members. We did make a point of picking up any firearms, ammo, bows and arrows or other weapons used against us. Finally, I should point out that we never once continued a recovery operation where somebody was there first. We had more than enough in the first place and it wasn't worth the risk in the second place.

With two major propane wholesalers, Ferrellgas and AmeriGas, plus several other smaller suppliers, we were able to fill and bring out 4 delivery trucks leaving the remainder for the other survivors. Gasoline was drawn out of a tank at one station using our pump and a portable generator for power. Diesel fuel wasn't hard to find, just hard to move. I-44 runs through town and there were plenty of truck stops. We finally located 2 tankers, one at the last truck stop we checked and the other on I-44. The former was empty while the latter had a full load of #2.

It wasn't until we located a 50kw, 3-phase generator that we were able to power the pumps at the truck stop to pump the fuel back into the tanker. We now had 1,000-gallons of stabilized gasoline for the cars that still ran, our two newly refilled diesel tanks holding 24,000-gallons and two full diesel tankers. Our supply of PRI products was limited to four cases of PRI-D and 3½-gallons of PRI-G. The 1:2,000 ratio of the PRI prod-

ucts meant that we could treat 24 times 2,000 or 48,000-gallons of additional diesel before we needed to find more.

It wasn't like I could just go on the internet and order a case from Battery Stuff up in Grants Pass, Oregon. We had gotten a local supplier to order what we had, initially having six cases of D and four gallons of G. If it got really cold, you used 1:2,000. We suspected that some of the dealers who didn't sell much diesel already added something to stabilize their fuel but they weren't around to ask.

To ensure we had ample quantities of Power Research products, we sent Kent and Bill out on a mission, to find a pickup load of PRI-D and PRI-G and not come home until they did. The sneaky kids were home 6 hours later; laughing so hard tears were flowing.

"What's so funny?"

"Ask my Dad," Kent managed between laughs.

"Jake, what's so funny?"

"Well, we have a large equipment inventory and I have tanks of diesel and gasoline at our shop. I use Power Research, Inc. products to protect our fuel. We normally store 25 cases each of PRI-D and PRI-G and reorder in 25 case lots when we get down to 5 cases. We got our order in three weeks ago before, well, you know. We had 28 cases of PRI-D and 8 cases of PRI-G. We buy in multiple case lots from the Manufacturer."

"Why didn't somebody say something?"

"It was worth it just to see the look on your face Dad. Heck, we even had a little time to go shopping."

"Find anything?"

"Where did you buy your gold and silver?"

"Kansas City."

"Why not in Lebanon?"

"I didn't know it was available in Lebanon."

"Well, it isn't...anymore. Kent and I split it 50/50. The only reason we were gone so long was that we had one heck of a time getting into the safe."

Dad looked at them over his reading glasses and if looks could have killed, they'd have been six foot under. He was his stoic self and I doubt Bill or Kent knew what that look meant. I'll translate; they had crossed the line in his opinion, from recovery to looting.

We were indeed taking property that didn't belong to us over which, as near as we could determine, no living person had a prior claim. Were that not the case, most of it was available to be returned with nominal proof of ownership. During those three weeks of recovery, Susan and baby Sheena stayed in the shelter, monitoring the business radio and picking up what she could from the amateur bands. She related that more than once that another ham would jump her for cutting into a conversation in an effort to get information. They relented slightly when she gave them her call sign suggesting she just listen and pick up what she could.

"Bill, why did you loot the gold and silver?"

"If we hadn't gotten it someone else might have."

"That's not the point; you can't eat gold and silver any more than you can eat a TV."

"Maybe. But if someone has extra food and we need it, they may be willing to part with it for a little gold or silver."

"Humph."

"Do you disagree?"

"Yes, but what you said is valid. I'd rather we not go that route and your grandfather was decidedly unhappy."

"He didn't say anything."

"You didn't catch that look? He lowered the book he was reading and looked over his glasses with a look of displeasure."

"If we happen on more, we'll bring it up for discussion before we recover it."

"Are you going to have any problems getting the tractor to run?"

"I checked it and it runs now. I don't think we're going to be planting anytime soon, winter is coming on. I picked up some spare parts in town, just in case."

"That reminds me, one thing we haven't stocked up on is 15W-40 oil plus oil, air and fuel filters. Can you help out on that?"

"I'll talk to Kent and we'll hook up a trailer to each pickup and go shopping. It might be nice to have someone riding shotgun. Know where the Cummins dealers are?"

“Yes, they’re in Collinsville, Illinois east of St. Louis, Joplin, Kansas City and Springfield. I think we’d better scratch Kansas City and Collinsville or save them for last. We need to look for bulk oil in 55-gallon drums but I’m not sure where to look.”

“Where did you get what you have?”

“In Lebanon, special order.”

“I’ll ask Jake, he’ll know. Why are you excluding KC and St. Louis?”

“I assume they were nuked.”

“I think maybe we’d better check that out. No harm, no foul.”

I was failing to take advantage of an important resource in Jake. He ran a large construction firm and probably knew where to get most anything we needed. We could probably grow nearly everything we needed with surpluses to sell or barter to the survivors in the area. There were some, and we hadn’t bothered them or checked to see if their weapons worked. Many knew Dad well enough to waive so I assumed they were somewhat friendly.

There had to be some of the local government still in operation and we left it to them to get a head count, determine the needs of the townsfolk and come to us if they thought we might have anything they needed. We hadn’t had time to breed the sows or the cows, but we did have 30 cattle being raised for meat, half of which were at or over market weight. We could easily get by for a year without butchering for ourselves, even with Jake, Evelyn and Jane to feed. Jake and Evelyn were Kent’s parents and presumably, Janet’s mother had died in Kansas City.

We had no idea how John, Susan and William had come through so I relented about going to St. Louis and Kansas City on the condition we pull out if the radiation became too high. Considering the extra firearms we’d accumulated, I wouldn’t mind a trip to the Lake City plant for 7.62 and 5.56. Even if others had been there and taken ammunition, there still had to be large stocks left. John lived in a western suburb of Kansas City and both Susan and William lived in St. Peters northwest of downtown St. Louis.

“Sheena, we’re making one more trip. Kent, Bill, Dad and I are taking the pickups and trailers to Kansas City, Independence, St. Louis, Collinsville and returning here. We’ll unload and go to Springfield and Joplin. The primary purposes are to check on family, look for generators and generator parts and check on military ammo. I’m going to talk to Jake about locating several drums of 15W-40 oil for the generators.”

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It started to snow on our way to Kansas City. We slowed, switched to 4WD and continued. Our first stop was to see John and Marsha. They were short on food, the radiation

levels were hovering around 100mR and they wanted out. Bill and Kent looked around and found a working pickup with a topper and 4WD. They also got a U-Haul trailer and we helped them load up for a trip home. I gave John a M16A2, loaded magazines, a M9 with extra loaded magazines and the remainder of the cases of ammo.

We located the Cummins dealer and took all the supplies he had for the Quiet diesels. My friend was at home, and very dead. We took the ammo from his garage and basement and skipped the trip to the Lake City Plant.

We then headed for St. Louis, and found both families well but close to starving. In a repeat of Kansas City, we located non-electronic diesel pickups and U-Haul trailers. When both families were ready to leave, we passed out rifles, pistols, magazines and ammo. Our trip to Collinsville was more successful; we got double the parts that we had in KC and a 100kw generator, a Cummins model DGDB rated at 100kw Standby, 90kw Prime.

Upon our return home, the contents of the trailers and pickups were unloaded in the machine/storage shed and after a one night layover; we headed to Springfield and then Joplin. Springfield yielded more rebuild kits and a two year supply of the various filters. Joplin gave us another 12.5kw Quiet diesel and 18 months' worth of parts. When we returned home the next day, there was a lowboy parked and loaded with 55-gallon drums of 15W-40. We again unloaded and called it quits. The snow had started coming down heavily by then. The new 12.5kw Quiet diesel went to power the big house and we left the 100kw genset sitting until we could determine our next move.

"Boston, we must be very careful about engaging other groups of survivors. The worst thing that could happen would be a Pyrrhic victory."

"Define that."

"A Pyrrhic victory is a victory with devastating cost to the victor. We don't have that large of a group that we can afford many, or any, losses. Say we got into a battle with someone and we destroyed them but lost 80% of our population; you could say we won, but in reality, we lost. This is a large farm including what I gave to you; add up the number of defenders we have."

"Everyone?"

"Exclude children under 10."

"Mom and you are 2. John, Marsha and their two kids are 4. Susan, Don and their two are 4. William, Cindy and their two are 4. Sheena, me and our two are 4. Add in two spouses and three parents and you have 5. Two plus sixteen plus five equals twenty-three but Susan will have to take care of Sheena, cutting that to twenty-two. Six hundred forty acres divided by twenty-two means each person would be responsible for twenty-nine acres. Um, I see what you mean; we'd be spread pretty thin."

“I’m going to go ahead and write up deeds for the farm. The others will get 160 acres and you’ll get the 120 acres I promised. Someday, if civilization ever recovers, you can record the deeds.”

“At least we’ll have more help to farm, if it ever warms up.”

“Ask Bill and Kent to start looking for more horses. We’ll need at least 12 riding horses with tack plus either 6 mules or 6 draft horses with harnesses.”

“We’ll probably have better luck finding mules here in Missouri.”

“If you find them, try to find from draft horse mares. Dad said they’re bigger and can handle nearly impossible loads.”

“The tractor runs!”

“I know, you told me. I had in mind pack animals. Unlike tractors, mules don’t burn diesel or require parts. If you can find two draft mares and a pair of male donkeys, get them too and we’ll breed our own.”

While Dad’s pickup was fairly new, ours was new back when Nixon or Ford was president. It was a Ford F-100 with ½ ton capacity and an 8’ box; a special edition perhaps? It was probably worth about 10 times what it had cost new because it still ran and didn’t need a lot of body work. It wasn’t the original engine, either; I had to replace the gasoline engine with a diesel. It had a four on the floor manual transmission, rebuilt a time or two.

If we got enough horses for everyone to have a horse, we’d need some sort of animal to haul our packs and mules were good for that. Back during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the US sent mules to Pakistan to haul goods to the Afghan mujahedeen. Surefooted in the mountain regions and carrying heavy loads, they were perfect.

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“We found them, but they wanted gold. We bought 6 mules, 2 stallions, 6 mares and 12 geldings plus saddles, bridles, halters for the saddle horses and harnesses and pack rigs for the mules. Here’s the list and the Bill of Sale. I expect to be reimbursed, thank you very much.”

The Soddy – Chapter 6

“Fine, but where are they?”

“We have to get a big box trailer and go pick them up from the Amish. The tack is in the pickup and trailer.”

I realized that 26 animals probably wouldn't fit into one 40' trailer. On top of that, we needed more feed, if they had it to sell. When I told Dad what Bill and Kent had done, he asked to see the Bill of Sale. He took it with him and went to the gun safe where he opened the metal file and began counting out gold, and later, silver coins.

“We don't have a reference so I'm going to value the gold at \$1,500 an ounce and silver at \$30 an ounce. It's a couple of dollars more than they spent, but they did the work.”

“I could pay for them.”

“Nonsense; if I pay for them I can divide up the horses among my family and your mother can hang on to some of them for herself and Jane and Jake and Evelyn. Did the saddles have scabbards?”

“I didn't look, but I doubt it; Amish are non-violent.”

“After we get the animals and livestock feed, you get those boys looking for cowboy guns. It's hard to carry a rifle with a box magazine in a scabbard.”

The Amish seemed to be everywhere; there were very large communities in Pennsylvania and Ohio, the group in Iowa and several small groups here in Missouri. The Iowa Amish had turned their industriousness into large profits with Amana Refrigeration and the Woolen Mills. Dad said he had been up there once and the Woolen Mills once made a heavy blanket. They hadn't made them for a while and the only company that he knew of still making that heavy of a blanket was Pendleton. A heavy blanket might feel good on the bed right now, but Pendleton? It was a long way to Oregon.

The scabbards proved to be a bigger challenge than the Marlin rifles and Ruger Vaqueros. Before the snow got deep, everyone had their own if they were ten-years-old or older; which is not to say that ammunition was passed out, it was just too damned cold to go shooting. Those were probably the cleanest guns in the country and those M16s from the armory were probably as clean as they were when they came from the factory.

We were thinking that nobody in their right mind would be out in weather like this; and, we were safe. That didn't cover people not in their right mind and around Thanksgiving, I lost track of the year, it was blowing up a real blizzard when the lower left front room window shattered.

“Damned wind. Boston go get a piece of plywood from the machine shed and we’ll board that over.”

Ping...the upper pane of glass from the same window shattered, radiating out from what had been a small hole.

“Duck and cover, we’re taking fire!”

“Get real, only a madman would be out in the middle of a blizzard!”

Ping...the lower pane of the right front room window shattered.

“Son... of... a...bitch. Forget the plywood; get your guns, boys.”

I think it’s going to be a long, cold winter. I thought about it (about 2 seconds), put on my parka, strapped on my Taurus, slung my Mossy over my back muzzle down and loaded a magazine into my rifle. My Tac-Force Harness held 8 magazines and 00 shotgun shells in the grenade pockets. It was large enough to go over top of the parka, but it limited my mobility. The others got their rifles, either M16s or M1As and we slipped out the back door for a short hunting trip.

Did I say short? Visibility wasn’t but about 20’ and the only reason the shooter saw the windows was the light coming from them. Still he...or...she had to be fairly close and armed with a rifle, maybe a .22. A large caliber rifle should have made a sound we could have heard and the only thing we heard was the glass shattering. If the person wanted to get our attention, he...or...she succeeded. Seven grownups and some teenagers on a people hunt on Thanksgiving in the middle of a blizzard. Norman Rockwell is never around when you want a drawing! (Does anyone still take The Saturday Evening Post?)

Don’t let anyone kid you; muzzle flash can give away your position unless you have one of those enhanced flashhiders TOM always writes about. We didn’t hear the next shot, but several of us saw the flash and through hand signals decided to flank the shooter. The teenagers and Jake would stay here, and three of us would go left and the other three would go right and cut them off at the pass or something like that. He...or...she stopped shooting and we closed in. The next time a shot was fired, we had his, her, uh, them. They were taking turns shooting at the house with a single shot .22, warming their hands in between shots. Dad grabbed the rifle, John grabbed the boy and Brother William grabbed the girl.

“Boston, go get the plywood and cover those windows.”

“You heard your grandfather Bill, go do it. Take Kent with you.”

“But, I want...”

“I’ll fill you in.”

The two kids, young teenagers, were led to the kitchen and told to take a seat at the kitchen table.

“Just what IN THE NAME OF GOD did you two think you were doing? Didn’t you SEE THE DOOR? DOORS ARE FOR KNOCKING ON! Ruth, get these two kids blankets, please.”

In the heat they were now shivering, something we hadn’t previously noticed. They looked like those horses you always hear about, rode hard and put up wet. They were soaked to the skin and shivering too bad to respond. Mom put a blanket over her and then him and started the kettle to make hot water for cocoa. Dad stopped yelling at them and went to the front room to supervise Bill and Kent putting the covers over the broken windows. He had a blanket for each window to act as an improvised seal since the window frames were rough sawn, not smooth.

“We couldn’t go any further, mister. We were just trying to get someone’s attention.”

“Oh really? Well you did a bang up job. Drink some cocoa. Then, I want to hear your story and don’t leave anything out.”

“We’re from Drynob, east a ways on 32.”

“Sweethearts?”

“Brother and sister, mister. Dad was in Kansas City and Mom broke down and grieved herself away. We had some food, enough for quite a while, but the only way to get any more was walk to Lebanon. Long walk and I waited until too late. Rose and I started out, finally, two days ago. Then this storm came in and we couldn’t turn back because there was no food. We kept going until we were nearly frozen and then saw your light. I sorry mister, I just couldn’t make it to the door to knock.”

“Let them be now, Francis. We’ll get them cleaned up, dressed in some dry clothes and they can join us for dinner.”

I can’t say as I can ever remember him giving her the look that I saw. It was akin to the look he gave Bill when Bill told us about the gold. However, stoicism isn’t something one simply turns on and off. Sheena set two additional places at the kitchen table because the dining room table was already full to overflowing with the food set on the Buffet. I can’t remember ever having this large of a group for Thanksgiving. I was hoping the 26 pound turkey Mom had would be big enough, but she had also cooked a bone in, spiral cut ham.

There were about 30 pounds of mashed potatoes, 4 quarts of green beans made into the usual casserole, stuffing plus extra dressing baked in a dish, candied sweet pota-

toes, cranberry relish, pistachio salad, gravy and, of course, hot buns (real ones, not the burn and serve kind).

When our guests came down all cleaned up and dressed in dry clothes, Dad did grace and the kids from the kitchen came to the buffet and filled their plates. We continued until everyone had filled their plate and Dad nodded – our sign to begin eating. Because of the size of the gathering, the conversations were localized, but I'm sure the topic was the same around the table; those two kids and their rather unique method of getting attention. I was sitting next to Jake who said, "Count your lucky stars they didn't have a .30-06."

It cleared off late the following week and we were able to get into Lebanon and get replacement glass panes. The brother and sister stayed in the big house, the girl with Jane and the boy alone in the 4th bedroom. Their last name was Smith and he was Ronald, 14, and she was Rose, 13. Ron said his dad had guns, but they were locked up in a gun safe. Nice ones if he were to be believed, M14s. We got Ron around and drove down to their home. Once inside he showed us the safe, a combination dial. Next to the safe was a filing cabinet and filed under the label 'guns' was the safe manufacturer's combination sheet.

Ron was pretty close to being right, but as we suspected, the rifles were M1As. The safe contained a 12 gauge 870 with both barrels and a second with both barrels in 20 gauge. The M1As were a Loaded and a Super Match, the former with a red dot sight and the latter with a very nice Leupold Mark IV variable. I easily identified the 26 magazines as the new USGI magazines available from the gun store in Lebanon. The ammo for the rifles was a mix, Aussie surplus for the Loaded and Black Hills for the Super Match. On the shelf were a Colt Commander, a Browning Hi-Power Mark III and a Ruger Mk II with 4" barrel. The third rifle in the case was a Browning A Bolt in .300 Winchester Magnum equipped with the same scope that the Super Match had. The scoped rifles were clearly sniper rifles. There were also two parkerized Mini-14s with a total of 20 of the 20-round Ruger magazines, marked 'Law Enforcement Only'.

Ron showed us where he had buried his mother, but at the moment it was just a mound of snow. Dad said a short prayer and we went back to the house to gather up their clothing, guns and ammo. Ron also got the family Bible so he could include the deaths of their mother and father. On the way home I remembered Jake's remark. It should have been, "Thank your lucky stars they didn't have the combination to the gun safe." A .300 Winchester Magnum with a 178gr A-MAX bullet puts out the bullet at 2,960fts with 3,462ftlb of energy at the muzzle.

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It wasn't but two weeks before another, bigger storm rolled in. Ron and Rose were nice enough kids and remained contrite, possibly because of their behavior on Thanksgiving. I can't say that I wouldn't have done the same in the same circumstances and Dad ap-

peared to have gotten over it. All we were out was the time it took to get and cut the glass to fit, install and grout it.

“Which of your father’s guns are you going to take Ron?”

“The Colt, the Super Match and the 870 set up with the short barrel and magazine extension. Rose will take the Mark III, her Mini-14 and 20 gauge set up the same as mine. I got this gadget out of Dad’s dresser; does anyone know what it is?”

“Get me the Ruger pistol and I’ll check; I have a pretty good idea what it is. Is there a box of subsonic ammo?”

“More than that.”

“I only need a few rounds to test my theory.”

The device slipped over the end of the barrel and locked in place with a quarter turn to the left. I now knew, but the proof would be in the test with subsonic ammo. I loaded 5 rounds into the magazine and we took an empty coke can out to the back porch and tossed it the snow. Pfutt, Pfutt, Pfutt, Pfutt, Pfutt. It was just your usual handy dandy silencer, and a good one to boot. Honestly, the shots weren’t much louder than described, because there was no sonic crack and the silencer was well made.

“Where did your father get this?”

“A friend of his made it for him. We weren’t supposed to know about it, but I saw him looking at it one day and got curious. That’s a silencer, isn’t it?”

“Yes it is and a good one.”

“I’ll put it up; who knows, we might need it someday.”

“He didn’t have any for his rifles, did he?”

“If he did, I never saw them.”

I thought about that silencer. Ron said he wasn’t supposed to know about it. The Super Match, Loaded and Browning A Bolt were in the gun safe and I opened it up and looked at the rifles. I’d seen pictures of Surefire’s Fast Attach Adapter. The Browning had been threaded and an adapter added. Both M1A’s had the National Match flashhiders replaced with Surefire muzzle brake adapters. There had to be three suppressors that Ron didn’t know about. The bullet diameters for the 7.62x51mm bullet and the .300 bullet were the same, .308 inches.

A few weeks later when the roads were clear enough to go back to Ron’s home, I got him and we went looking. On the way I explained that I had examined the 3 rifles and

they each had a special adapter made by a company in Fountain Valley, CA that manufactured suppressors. I explained that they were a cylinder about 1½” in diameter and 8” long. I wondered aloud if he’d seen anything that looked like that.

“I haven’t seen anything that looks like that Mr. Corbett. Dad kept some of his gun supplies in a box in the garage, we might look there.”

“Anywhere else?”

“He had a fire safe for his important papers in their bedroom closet. The combination is in his center desk drawer.”

“Have you seen what’s in the safe?”

“No sir, he said it just contained important papers.”

“Would you mind if we checked the garage and the safe?”

“No, if there is something in either we can use, we should get it. I think the box in the garage is cleaning supplies.”

That was exactly what the box contained, Hoppe’s #9, Breakfree CLP, cleaning kits and patches. Ron got the safe combination and opened it. On the bottom shelf, behind some papers was a box containing the suppressors. Each was labeled with masking tape indicating which rifle it belonged to.

The Remington M-24 SWS came in three calibers, 7.62x51mm, .300 Winchester Magnum and .338 Lapua Magnum. The M-24 SWS had been adopted to replace the M21 and M25 rifles. Except for the stock, the Super Match was the civilian version of the M-21 and the Browning A Bolt was probably as close of an equivalent to the M-24 SWS in .300 Winchester Magnum as was available. There were 10 500-round cases of Black Hills for the Super Match and about 3,000 rounds of .300 Winchester Magnum 178gr Hornady A-MAX.

The Browning would have too much recoil for a 14 year-old to shoot, but not the M1As. We didn’t have to worry about military rifles for these two, only cowboy guns and we had extra after Bill and Kent’s recovery trip. I was envious of the arsenal Ron and Rose possessed although, until he got a bit older, I might get to shoot the A Bolt.

Dad and I discussed what we should do with/about Ron and Rose. As far as he was concerned, they were new members of the family and he said Mom agreed. That cinched that, he was still the head of the family. The other matter we discussed was what to do with the big 90kw generator. Whatever we decided, it was a one-time decision, the generator weighed over a ton, dry.

"I say we wait until it warms up and hook the generator up to the grid side of the farm power lines. We can pull down some of the grid lines and dig up some of the poles and feed power where it's need on the farm. If we do that Boston, we'll use fewer of the filters and have the smaller units when needed."

"You're the boss, where do we put it?"

"Leave it where it is and run some heavy lines from the machine shed to the well house where the main power panel is. Spring will be late this year and I don't know if we'll be able to get into the field or not. It is best that we go looking around for livestock feed we can recover or buy. When we have the chance, we'll need to refill the fuel tanks and pump more fuel out of that truck stop's tanks. And, to think I thought you were nuts with all the prepping you did."

"I didn't give you any reason to believe otherwise back when we moved here. Thank God I found that forum and made notes. It may have been one of the biggest on the subject of preparation. I just wish...oh well, it doesn't matter."

"You just wish what?"

"I just wish we had some heavy firepower. Some of the M16s have M203s mounted but we don't have any of the 40mm grenades. That A Bolt gives us a sniper rifle with a range of about 1,100 meters, but a .50 caliber would be double that. I suppose we could find some dynamite or other explosives and make IEDs to protect the farm, but some of those AT-4s would do the same thing and be portable."

"What do you know about antitank rockets?"

"Only what I've read. Army Field Manual 3-25.25 covers both the M-72 LAW and the M136 AT4 antitank rockets. I have a copy on my computer. Like the LAW, the AT4 is packed five per package. Unlike the LAW, the AT4 is five per crate while the LAW has 3 packages per crate. If we found AT4s, we'd want the ones with the black and yellow bands denoting HE anti-armor rounds. All of the LAW rockets are antitank."

"Say I know where to go, then what?"

"We try to acquire basic munitions like smoke grenades, fragmentation and concussion grenades, anti-armor rockets, M107 rifles and ammo."

"To prevent the Mongol hoard from invading?"

"To protect the farm from thieves."

"That's sort of like the pot calling the kettle black. And, to top it off, we have our own Cavalry Troop."

“No, Dad; it would be more like a Cavalry Platoon. A Troop is 3 or 4 Platoons, each led by a Lieutenant. The Troop is commanded by a Captain. I read a lot. You said you knew where to go. Where would that be?”

“Fort Leonard Wood. It’s close enough to ride your Platoon of Cavalry there.”

“But, a 40’ box trailer could haul more.”

“Assuming you could find what you want.”

“We’ll just fan out and look until we find the stuff.”

I was embarrassed and sort of wanted to do a Fleataxi, ergo, pound myself on my head. I could almost walk to the Fort on a good day.

o

Our military was an all-volunteer force and I’d never volunteered. Instead, I made cartridges for their weapons. I was satisfied that I had done my part, supporting the military. We could no longer say *the times were a changing* (Bob Dylan); they had, in fact, changed, and not for the better. Home values were no longer falling and I doubt there was a stock market to worry about. I didn’t know a whole lot about fighting, military style. As a civilian, I deemed myself to be proficient.

*Come gather round people wherever you roam
And admit that the waters around you have grown
And accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone
If your time to you is worth saving
Then you'd better start swimming or you'll sink like a stone
For the times, they are a changing*

*Come writers and critics who prophesize with your pens
And keep your eyes open, the chance won't come again
And don't speak too soon, the wheel's still in spin
And there's no telling who that it's naming
Oh the loser will be later to win
For the times, they are a changing*

*Come senators, congressmen, please head the call
Don't stand in the doorway, don't block up the hall
For he that gets hurt will be her that has stalled
The battle outside ragging will soon shake your windows
And rattle your hall
For the times, they are a changing*

Come mothers and fathers all over this land

*And don't criticize what you can't understand
Your sons and your daughter are beyond your command
Your old role is rapidly aging
Please get out of the new one if you can't lend a hand
For the times they are a changing*

*The line, it is drawn, the curse, it is cast
The slow one will later be fast
And the present now will soon be the past
The order is rapidly fading
The first one now will later be last
For the times, they are a changing*

His view on the '60s, I suppose; very applicable to our present circumstance. The song actually pre-dated the War in Vietnam, having been recorded in 1963.

o

We actually did mount up a squad and the tractor trailer came to haul the stuff after we located it. There would be no crops this year, the sub-surface moisture extended all the way to the surface. The survivors in Lebanon had gathered together and used the local greenhouse to grow vegetables. We traded them four of our overweight steers for a small portion of the fresh vegetables.

But back to our trip to Fort Leonard Wood; the scouting expedition yielded two M107 rifles, an Mk15 and 25 cans of Mk211MP ammo plus a larger supply of M1022. We got every color of smoke there was mostly white, Willy Pete, Mk3A2 concussion, M67 fragmentation and AN-M14 TH3 Thermate grenades. The only antitank rockets we could find were the M136 AT4s but found M18A1 Claymore mines in those satchel thingies. If they had demolition charges, we couldn't find them. We found 6 pallets of the rockets, 20 per pallet, enough, I think, to last for a while. One of the pallets contained practice rockets so we got a chance to learn how to use them.

I emptied the 00 Buck rounds from my Tac-Force vest and replaced them with 3 M-67 in each of the two grenade pockets. Other grenades could be hung from my load bearing equipment, if/as need. I replaced my shotgun sling with one that held 15 shells and slipped on an elastic stock carrier holding 6 slugs. We had some passerby's but when they saw our muddy fields, they kept going.

"It looks like now all you need is a war Boston."

"No sir, not if we can avoid it; I just like being prepared."

"Did you get the big rifles sighted in?"

“Actually, they were already sighted in. We did verify the settings and they’re good to go. On the diagonal, the farm is 2,489 yards or 2,276 meters. That’s further than the longest shot I know about so the rifle is good out to its maximum effective range.”

“The rifle’s effective range or your effective range?”

“If I’m shooting the rifle, it’s the same thing, my effective range.”

“Did we get the livestock bred?”

“As they came into heat, yes, we did. We need to figure out the cheese operation.”

“We’ll just sell the milk to the folks in Lebanon and let them figure out the cheese operation. Were they happy to get fresh eggs?”

“The dairy paid a premium, \$1.75 per dozen.”

“Is the dairy back to dealing in eggs? Things seem to run full circle, don’t they? Are you candling the eggs?”

“Yes and if they have an embryo, we put them back in the hen house. Most hatch since we don’t give them a real chance to cool off. We may end up having fryers or broilers to sell.”

“With our current population, we could stand to have some baking hens too.”

“We’re butchering the hens that quit laying. The locker plant was happy to butcher our beef in exchange for pork and beef to butcher. We unloaded four of those overweight steers and all of our extra hogs.”

“What’s next, Boston?”

“Locating the livestock feed. It’s going to have to come from abandoned farms or from farmers willing to sell or trade.”

“I’m not going to help. Your brothers and sister are here and Jake and the others can lend a hand. I’m getting tired and plan to limit myself to advising when questions crop up.”

◦

A word about our single action revolvers and our leather. We didn’t have the Paladin, rig, the Clint Eastwood rig, the Duke rig or even the Laredoan rig; we had holsters with a strap to retain the revolvers and gun belts that held 24 or 25 cartridges. Some added a leather thong, but most didn’t. The wild, wild west was thata way, we were in the Midwest.

The Soddy – Chapter 7

Don't believe that crap about the snow stopping at I-70 either. We were not only south of I-70, we were south of I-44 and still had a lot of snow. Enough, at least, that we couldn't work the fields this year. The upside of the situation was that we could look for feed and everyone could learn to ride or refresh their riding skills. Those among us who needed to become familiar with firearms could get to a range and polish their skills.

That was one of those just in case things that a person had to do in a PAW. We did get a small amount of food, the strawberries produced a bumper crop and the berries were big.

There would be nuts to harvest come fall and when it was dry enough, we could go to Big Piney and get all the wood we wanted, no permit required. The Soddy still burned wood and we'd need wood for the wood burning kitchen stove when we had a garden. Sheena dumped some potato peelings in our compost pile and they sprouted. A few volunteer plants came in at our garden area despite the water, or perhaps because of it, and we had new potatoes and peas. We had the locker plant cut and smoke one entire hog, producing smoked hocks, smoked picnics, smoked butt roasts, smoked loins aka Canadian bacon, bacon, smoked ham and more smoked hocks. It was all good except for the smoked butt roasts, they were a bit greasy.

We muddled through the summer, obtaining the feed we needed, 2 more geldings for Ron and Rose and the firewood. With all of the help and extra chainsaws obtained in Lebanon, we probably wouldn't need more firewood for 10 years. Around mid-August, the Missouri Army Guard turned up in Lebanon. We happened to be in town delivering our milk and eggs. They set up at City Hall and sort of cordoned the town. We weren't allowed to leave until we had produced identification and accurate directions to where we lived.

These guys weren't born yesterday and a Hummer followed us home to verify we lived where we said we did. When we pulled in, it stopped and turned around, returning to Lebanon. I suppose we could have lied about where we lived and gone to the other place, but what was the use? We didn't consider the Missouri Guard to be our enemies. The Guard had a truck of medical supplies for the hospital and another of staples. It was a 5-ton truck, not a semi tractor-trailer rig.

We later learned that the staples consisted of grains: wheat, oats, corn, beans and rice. A few days later, the Hummer returned, a private driving a Sergeant. He was there, he said, to take a census and see if we needed anything or could spare anything. Dad and Jake handled him, answering his questions about who was here, some of what we had and told him we'd been supplying milk and eggs to Lebanon plus beef and pork when we had it. They continued that we planned on supplying chicken when we could.

The Sergeant saw the 100 cords of firewood and asked if we actually needed that much. Dad admitted that we didn't but also said it had been a lot of hard work cutting,

splitting and stacking the wood. The Sergeant then made an offer that Dad and Jake found hard to refuse; a 5-ton truckload of wheat, beans and rice in exchange for the 100 cords of wood. They accepted and we headed back to the forest. The Guard brought in tractor trailer rigs and loaded and hauled the wood, after they had delivered the food. We worked until it snowed and managed to replace 25 cords of the wood we'd traded off. After we'd settled in for the winter, I was commenting how lucky we'd been what with the Guard providing that food for the firewood.

"We were luckier than you can imagine."

"In what way?"

"Those Executive Orders that allow the government to take everything down to your drawers in a National Emergency. You don't know about those? I thought you read."

"Maybe I've been reading the wrong places."

"Stan Deyo had them on his website."

"Who?"

"Stan Deyo. He called the site *The Millennium Ark*. Steve Quayle had a link."

"I must have missed that one."

"I copied the list, I'll see if I can find it."

Dad left to look and was back in minutes.

"Here you go, check that out."

EXECUTIVE ORDER 10990 allows the government to take over all modes of transportation and control of highways and seaports.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 10995 allows the government to seize and control the communication media.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 10997 allows the government to take over all electrical power, gas, petroleum, fuels and minerals.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 10998 allows the government to seize all means of transportation, including personal cars, trucks or vehicles of any kind and total control over all highways, seaports, and waterways.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 10999 allows the government to take over all food resources and farms.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 11000 allows the government to mobilize civilians into work brigades under government supervision.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 11001 allows the government to take over all health, education and welfare functions.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 11002 designates the Postmaster General to operate a national registration of all persons.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 11003 allows the government to take over all airports and aircraft, including commercial aircraft.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 11004 allows the Housing and Finance Authority to relocate communities, build new housing with public funds, designate areas to be abandoned, and establish new locations for populations.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 11005 allows the government to take over railroads, inland waterways and public storage facilities.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 11049 assigns emergency preparedness function to federal departments and agencies, consolidating 21 operative Executive Orders issued over a fifteen-year period.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 11051 specifies the responsibility of the Office of Emergency Planning and gives authorization to put all Executive Orders into effect in times of increased international tensions and economic or financial crisis.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 11310 grants authority to the Department of Justice to enforce the plans set out in Executive Orders, to institute industrial support, to establish judicial and legislative liaison, to control all aliens, to operate penal and correctional institutions, and to advise and assist the President.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 11921 allows the Federal Emergency Preparedness Agency to develop plans to establish control over the mechanisms of production and distribution, of energy sources, wages, salaries, credit and the flow of money in US financial institution in any undefined national emergency. It also provides that when the President declares a state of emergency, Congress cannot review the action for six months. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has broad powers in every aspect of the nation. General Frank Salzedo, chief of FEMA's Civil Security Division stated in a 1983 conference that he saw FEMA's role as a "new frontier in the protection of individual and governmental leaders from assassination, and of civil and military installations from sabotage and/or attack, as well as prevention of dissident groups from gaining access to US opinion, or a global audience in times of crisis." FEMA's powers were consolidated by President Carter to incorporate the:

National Security Act of 1947 allows for the strategic relocation of industries, services, government and other essential economic activities, and to rationalize the requirements for manpower, resources and production facilities.

1950 Defense Production Act gives the President sweeping powers over all aspects of the economy.

Act of August 29, 1916 authorizes the Secretary of the Army, in time of war, to take possession of any transportation system for transporting troops, material, or any other purpose related to the emergency.

International Emergency Economic Powers Act enables the President to seize the property of a foreign country or national. These powers were transferred to FEMA in a sweeping consolidation in 1979.

“That doesn’t include all of Clinton’s, Bush Jr.’s or Obama’s Executive Orders. Come to think about it, it doesn’t include Bush, Sr.’s EO import ban.”

“In other words, they could have taken our firewood and not even said thanks?”

“That’s the way I read it. Helping the population isn’t the military’s problem; that duty lies with FEMA.”

“We’re doomed.”

“Maybe not, the Guard reports to the Governor. We’ll keep an eye out and not worry about it, for now.”

“So if we get a good crop next year, they could come in and take it?”

“They can try.”

o

His answer was less than satisfying. All of our cavalry vehicles were one horse power compared to their Hummers, attack helicopters, artillery and what not. I’m beginning to understand how Custer must have felt. Our Marlins held more rounds of .45-70-405 but took longer to reload. I could also see why some of the PAW fiction authors emphasized looting military supply depots and getting machine guns and all that firepower.

Pulling off a mounted cavalry expedition meant hauling extra feed and dividing our forces down to a squad. We’d need one or more horse or mule-drawn supply wagons and...forget it, I’m getting a headache.

“What’s wrong honey?”

“Sheena, it would be easier to tell you what’s right.”

“The short version? Go for it.”

“Ok, the answer is simple, nothing is going right.”

“We have everything we need and can grow more, what do you mean?”

“The government can take any and everything we have because this list of Executive Orders.”

“Would they do that?”

“That’s the real problem, I just don’t know.”

“Well, we could hide it in the shelter, fill in the shelter entrance and stack dirt over the blast hatch.”

“I like it, maybe we can do just that and only leave out enough livestock feed for 30 days.”

We could always grow another horse, but if the Guard shot up a pickup, or worse hit it with an AT4, the vehicle would be a total, permanent write-off. And, with that big generator, even with the F217- Quiet Site II Second Stage sound enclosure, you were talking a very loud generator. It was anybody’s guess if they’d try to take some of our things for the greater good of the residents of Lebanon.

So, we installed schedule 40 4” PVC pipe and buried the wiring, removed the poles and stacked them as building materials. Thereafter, we fed the prime power through the underground lines to the shelter and big house, causing the smaller generators to kick in if we had to shut down the big one. It was easier done than described.

Ron and Rose fit in with our family like a hand in a glove. They were good kids who had done what they needed to do when they got desperate. It turned out that the Loaded rifle and the 20 gauge shotgun were Ron’s and the Super Match and 12 gauge belonged to his father. He said his father always carried and, on this trip had taken his compact 9mm Glock. He had obviously been allowed to shoot for some time; he was an above average marksman. Once accustomed to his father’s Super Match it seemed like he might be the next Carlos Hathcock.

o

Although concerned about Dad’s caution concerning the Guard and the government in general, we’d seen nothing to indicate implementation of any of those Executive Orders. The soldiers begun to share information about what had happened on the day the world tried to kill itself. Most of it conformed to what we’d heard on the amateur bands. Of all

the nations involved, the only participant who escaped mostly unscathed was Israel. As we expected, manufactured goods were limited, as was the demand.

To maintain law and order on a local level, the Guard was organizing militias to back up the local law enforcement. That was a law, not an Executive Order and the provisions for the unorganized militia were being implemented nationwide. If you recall, the unorganized militia was required to supply their own weapons, but the Guard had ammo available in 5.56 and 7.62. Strangely, nothing was said when people showed up carrying M16A2s or M4s stamped Property of US Government.

That Sergeant came back to negotiate a contract for firewood. He could offer limited food, mostly grains, ammunition (like we need it), fuel, stabilizers, and motor oil. We contracted the firewood for filters and 15W-40 motor oil. Jake and Kent went into Lebanon and picked up some of his construction equipment, most importantly a small crane. This allowed us to load large logs on flatbed trucks. We bartered for two industrial sized log splitters and began the arduous task of cutting, hauling, cutting, splitting and stacking firewood. Some of the younger boys were assigned to ride shotgun.

Before very long, all of the deadfalls and standing dead trees were eliminated from the Big Piney. As the name implies, much of the timber was pine, with some hardwoods, hickory being in high demand. We filled the Guard contract with pine and kept the hickory for individual sales and our own use, ending up with about 100 cords of hardwood for our own use and selling another 50 to those who could afford it.

With that winter over, we found our fields dry enough to plant for the first time since the strikes. The ladies went all out gardening and we returned to the National Forest after planting to locate and mark any new standing dead trees. Failing to find enough, we began to mark the largest trees to be cut down during the winter when the sap was down. Thank God we didn't have to put up with a bunch of those tree hugging environmentalists.

Eventually power generation was restored and the lines and poles we'd taken down were replaced with us supplying the poles we'd taken initially. The wiring in the pump house was switched over to allow the big generator to act as our standby and the farm to operate on grid power.

We continued to raise horses and mules, meeting a new demand. Our cattle and hog herds were increased and after meeting our own needs, we became a medium sized supplier of beef and pork. Our poultry operation was expanded and expanded again until we were raising about 20,000 chickens per year.

About 8 years after the strikes, Dad had a stroke that left him partially paralyzed and unable to speak. Mom, ever the trooper, tended to him until he passed. There wasn't much of an estate to settle because he'd deeded his land off years before and the deeds had been recorded.

None of the family ever left farming. Jake passed off his construction business to Kent and retired. Although none of my generation had really wanted to be farmers, it's exactly what we ended up becoming, acquiring additional land as it became available until each of us owned an adjoining section and acquiring used farm equipment in the process. My old pickup finally gave up the ghost having outlived Nixon, Ford, Carter, Bush Sr. and Clinton. Nobody had seen Bush Jr. since the strikes.

The country experienced what some called a rebirth. With the need to utilize local militias, the new federal government eliminated gun laws and the states were forced to follow or lose federal funding needed to rebuild. There were regulations, of course. You couldn't take a firearm certain places, like bars, but there were very few 'gun free zones'. It proved to be a shot in the arm for the auto industry that had all but gone belly up in 2009. In 2025, the waiting period for a new vehicle was six months long.

I'm Thomas P. 'Boston' Corbett; at your service and I specialize in killing Presidential assassins.

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